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SERMONS

SERMONS

BY

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VOL. IV.



SERMON VII.

The History of JACOB, considered.

SERMON VII.



SERMON VII.

GENESIS xlvii. 9.

And Jacob ſaid unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage, are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been.——

THERE is not a man in hiſtory, whom I pity more, than the man who made this reply——not becauſe his days were ſhort,—— but that they were long enough to have crouded into them, ſo much evil as we find.

Of all the patriarchs, he was the moſt unhappy: for 'bating the ſeven years he ſerved Laban for Rachael, "*which ſeemed to him but a few days, for the love he had to her,*"——ſtrike thoſe out of the number,——all his other days were ſorrow; and that, not from his faults, but from the ambition, the violences and evil paſſions of others. A large portion of what man is born to, comes, you'll ſay, from the ſame quarter: 'tis true; but ſtill in ſome men's lives, there ſeems a contexture of miſery;——one evil ſo riſes out of another, and the whole plan and execution of the piece has ſo very melancholy an air, that a good natured man ſhall not be able to look upon it, but with tears on his cheeks.

I pity

I pity this patriarch ſtill the more, becauſe, from his firſt ſetting out in life, he had been led into an expectation of ſuch different ſcenes: he was told, by Iſaac his father, that *God ſhould bleſs him with the dew of heaven, and the fatneſs of the earth, and with plenty of corn and wine*;——*that people were to ſerve him, and nations to bow down to him*;——*that he ſhould be lord over his brethren*;——*that bleſſed was every one that bleſſed him, and curſed was every one who curſed him.*

The ſimplicity of youth takes promiſes of happineſs in the fulleſt latitude,——and as theſe were moreover confirmed to him by the God of his fathers, on his way to Padan-aran,——

it would leave no diſtruſt of their accompliſhment, upon his mind;——every fair and flattering object before him, which wore the face of joy, he would regard as a portion of his bleſſing;——he would purſue it——he would graſp a ſhadow.

This, by the way, makes it neceſſary to ſuppoſe, that the bleſſings which were conveyed, had a view to bleſſings not altogether ſuch as a carnal mind would expect; but that they were in a great meaſure ſpiritual, and ſuch as the prophetic ſoul of Iſaac had principally before him, in the comprehenſive idea of their future and happy eſtabliſhment, when they were no longer to be ſtrangers and pil-

grims

grims upon earth: for in fact, in the ſtrict and literal ſenſe of his father's grant,——Jacob enjoyed it not; and was ſo far from being a happy man, that in the moſt intereſting paſſages of his life, he met with nothing but diſappointments and grievous afflictions.

Let us accompany him from the firſt treacherous hour of a mother's ambition; in conſequence of which, he is driven forth from his country, and the protection of his houſe, to ſeek protection and an eſtabliſhment in the houſe of Laban his kinſman.

In what manner this anſwered his expectations, we find from his own

pathetick remonſtrance to Laban, when he had purſued him ſeven day's journey, and overtook him on mount Gilead.——I ſee him in the door of the tent, with the calm courage which innocence gives the oppreſſed, thus remonſtrating to his father-in-law upon the cruelty of his treatment.

Theſe twenty years that I have been with thee,——the ewes have not caſt their young, and the rams of thy flock, have I not eaten. That which was torn of beaſts, I brought not unto thee, ——I bare the loſs of it; what was ſtolen by day, or ſtolen by night, of my hands didſt thou require it. Thus I was: in the day the drought conſumed me, and the froſt by night, and my ſleep

departed

departed from my eyes. Thus have I been twenty years in thy houſe:——I ſerved thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and ſix years for thy cattle; and thou haſt changed my wages ten times.

Scarce had he recovered from theſe evils, when the ill conduct and vices of his children, wound his ſoul to death.——Reuben proves inceſtuous, ——Judah adulterous,—his daughter Dinah is diſhonoured,——Simeon and Levi diſhonour themſelves by treachery,——two of his grandchildren are ſtricken with ſudden death,—Rachael his beloved wife periſhes, and in circumſtances which embitter'd his loſs, ——his ſon Joſeph, a moſt promiſing

ſing youth, is torn from him, by the envy of his brethren; and to cloſe all, himſelf driven by famine in his old age to die amongſt the Egyptians, a people who held it an abomination to eat bread with him. Unhappy patriarch! well might he ſay, *That few and evil had been his days*; the anſwer, indeed, was extended beyond the monarch's enquiry, which was ſimply his age;——but how could he look back upon the days of his pilgrimage, without thinking of the ſorrows which thoſe days had brought along with them? all that was more in the anſwer than in the demand, was the overflowings of a heart ready to bleed afreſh at the recollection of what had befallen.

Un-

Unwillingly does the mind digeſt the evils prepared for it by others;—for thoſe we prepare ourſelves,—we eat but the fruit which we have planted and watered:—a ſhattered fortune—a ſhattered frame, ſo we have but the ſatisfaction of ſhattering them ourſelves, paſs naturally enough into the habit, and by the eaſe with which they are both done, they ſave the ſpectator a world of pity: but for thoſe like Jacob's, brought upon him by the hands from which he looked for all his comforts,——the avarice of a parent,——the unkindneſs of a relation,——the ingratitude of a child,——they are evils which leave a ſcar;——beſides, as they hang over the heads of all, and therefore may fall upon any;

ny;——every looker on has an intereſt in the tragedy;——but then we are apt to intereſt ourſelves no otherwiſe, than merely as the incidents themſelves ſtrike our paſſions, without carrying the leſſon further:——in a word—we realize nothing:——we ſigh——we wipe away the tear,—and there ends the ſtory of miſery, and the moral with it.

Let us try to do better with this. To begin, with the bad bias which gave the whole turn to the patriarch's life,——parental partiality——or parental injuſtice,——it matters not by what title it ſtands diſtinguiſhed——'tis that, by which Rebekah planted a dagger in Eſau's breaſt; and an

eternal

eternal terror with it, in her own, leſt ſhe ſhould live to be deprived of them, both in one day——and truſt me, dear Chriſtians, wherever that equal balance of kindneſs and love, which children look up to you for as their natural right, is no longer maintained —there will daggers ever be planted; *the ſon ſhall literally be ſet at variance againſt his father, and the daughter againſt her mother, and the daughter-in-law againſt her mother-in-law,—and a man's foes ſhall be they of his own houſhold.*

It was an excellent ordinance, as well of domeſtick policy, as of equity; which

which Moſes gave upon this head, in the 21ſt of Deuteronomy.

If a man have two wives, one beloved and one hated, and they have born him children, both the beloved and the hated, and if the firſt born ſon be hers that was hated, then it ſhall be, when he maketh his ſons to inherit that which he hath, that he may not make the ſon of the beloved, firſt born, before the ſon of the hated which is indeed the firſt born,—— but he ſhall acknowledge the ſon of the hated for firſt born, by giving him a double portion of all that he hath. The evil was well fenced againſt——for 'tis one of thoſe which ſteals in upon the heart

heart with the affections, and courts the parent under ſo ſweet a form, that thouſands have been betrayed by the very virtues which ſhould have preſerved them. Nature tells the parent, there can be no error on the ſide of affection;——but we forget, when Nature pleads for one, ſhe pleads for every child alike——and, Why is not her voice to be heard? Solomon ſays, Oppreſſion will make a wiſe man mad.——What will it do then, to a tender and ingenuous heart, which feels itſelf neglected,——too full of reverence for the author of its wrongs to complain?——ſee, it ſits down in ſilence, robbed by diſcouragements, of all its natural powers to pleaſe,——born to ſee others loaded with careſſes

——in ſome uncheary corner it nouriſhes it's diſcontent,——and with a weight upon it's ſpirits, which it's little ſtock of fortitude is not able to withſtand, —— it droops and pines away.—— Sad Victim of Caprice!

We are unavoidably led here into a reflection upon Jacob's conduct in regard to his ſon Joſeph, which no way correſponded with the leſſon of wiſdom, which the miſeries of his own family might have taught him: ſurely his eyes had ſeen ſorrows ſufficient on that ſcore, to have taken warning: and yet we find, that he fell into the ſame ſnare of partiality to that child in his old age, which his mother Rebekah had ſhewn to him, in hers,——

for Iſrael loved Joſeph more than all his children; becauſe he was the ſon of his old age, and he made him a coat of many colours.——O Iſrael! Where was that prophetick ſpirit which darted itſelf into future times, and told each tribe what was to be its fate?——Where was it fled, that it could not aid thee to look ſo little a way forwards, as to behold *this coat of many colours*, ſtained with blood? Why were the tender emotions of a parent's anguiſh hid from thy eyes?——and, Why is every thing?——but that it pleaſes heaven to give us no more light in our way, than will leave virtue in poſſeſſion of it's recompence.——

——Grant me, gracious God! to go chearfully on, the road which thou haſt marked out;——I wiſh it neither more wide or more ſmooth:——continue the light of this dim taper thou haſt put into my hands:——I will kneel upon the ground ſeven times a day, to ſeek the beſt track I can with it:——and having done that, I will truſt myſelf and the iſſue of my journey to thee, who art the fountain of joy,——and will ſing ſongs of comfort as I go along.

Let us proceed to the ſecond great occurrence in the patriarch's life.——The impoſition of a wife upon him which he neither bargain'd for or loved.

loved.——*And it came to paſs in the morning, behold it was Leah! and he ſaid unto Laban, What is this that thou haſt done unto me? Did I not ſerve thee for Rachael? Wherefore then haſt thou beguiled me?*

This indeed is out of the ſyſtem of all conjugal impoſitions now,——but the moral of it is ſtill good; and the abuſe with the ſame complaint of Jacob's upon it, will ever be repeated, ſo long as art and artifice are ſo buſy as they are in theſe affairs.

Liſten, I pray you, to the ſtories of the diſappointed in marriage:——collect all their complaints:——hear their mutual reproaches; upon what

fatal hinge do the greateſt part of them turn?—"They were miſtaken in the perſon."—Some diſguiſe either of body or mind is ſeen through in the firſt domeſtick ſcuffle;——ſome fair ornament——perhaps the very one which won the heart,——*the ornament of a meek and quiet ſpirit*, falls off;——*It is not the Rachael for whom I have ſerved*,——*Why haſt thou then beguiled me?*

Be open——be honeſt: give yourſelf for what you are; conceal nothing——varniſh nothing,——and if theſe fair weapons will not do,——better not conquer at all, than conquer for a day:——when the night is paſſed, 'twill

'twill ever be the ſame ſtory,——*And it came to paſs, behold it was Leah!*

If the heart beguiles itſelf in its choice, and imagination will give excellencies which are not the portion of fleſh and blood:——when the dream is over, and we awake in the morning, it matters little whether 'tis Rachael or Leah,——be the object what it will, as it muſt be on the earthly ſide, at leaſt, of perfection,—it will fall ſhort of the work of fancy, whoſe exiſtence is in the clouds.

In ſuch caſes of deception, let not man exclaim as Jacob does in his,—*What is it thou haſt done unto me?*——for 'tis his own doings, and he has

nothing to lay his fault on, but the heat and poetick indiſcretion of his own paſſions.

I know not whether 'tis of any uſe, to take notice of this ſingularity in the patriarch's life, in regard to the wrong he received from Laban, which was the very wrong he had done before to his father Iſaac, when the infirmities of old age had diſabled him from diſtinguiſhing one child from another: *Art thou my very ſon Eſau? and he ſaid, I am.* 'Tis doubtful whether Leah's veracity was put to the ſame teſt,—but both ſuffered from a ſimilitude of ſtratagem; and 'tis hard to ſay, whether the anguiſh, from croſs'd love, in the breaſt of one brother, might

might not be as sore a punishment, as the disquietudes of cross'd ambition and revenge in the breast of the other.

I do not see which way the honour of Providence is concerned in repaying us exactly in our own coin, —— or, why a man should fall into that very pit, (and no other) which he has *graven and digged for another man*: time and chance may bring such incidents about, and there wants nothing, but that Jacob should have been a bad man, to have made this a common-place text for such a doctrine.

It is enough for us, that the best way to escape evil, is in general, not to commit it ourselves —— and that

whenever the paſſions of mankind will order it otherwiſe, to rob thoſe, at leaſt, *who love judgments*, of the triumph of finding it out,——*That our travail has returned upon our heads, and our violent dealings upon our own pates.*

I cannot conclude this diſcourſe, without returning firſt to the part with which it ſet out;——the patriarch's account to the king of Egypt, of the ſhortneſs and miſery of his days:——give me leave to bring this home to us, by a ſingle reflection upon each.

There is ſomething ſtrange in it that life ſhould appear ſo ſhort *in the groſs*——and yet ſo long *in the detail*.

Miſery

Miſery may make it ſo, you'll ſay—but we will exclude it,——and ſtill you'll find, tho' we all complain of the ſhortneſs of life, what numbers there are who ſeem quite over-ſtocked with the days and hours of it, and are continually ſending out into the high ways and ſtreets of the city, to compel gueſts to come in, and take it off their hands: to do this with ingenuity and forecaſt, is not one of the leaſt arts and buſineſs of life itſelf; and they who cannot ſucceed in it, carry as many marks of diſtreſs about them, as bankruptcy herſelf could wear. Be as careleſs as we may, we ſhall not always have the power,——nor ſhall we always be in a temper to let the account run thus. When the blood

is cool'd, and the ſpirits, which have hurried us on through half our days, before we have numbered one of them, are beginning to retire;——then wiſdom will preſs a moment to be heard, —afflictions or a bed of ſickneſs will find their hours of perſuaſion —— and, ſhould they fail,—there is ſomething yet behind,——old age will overtake us at the laſt, and with its trembling hand, hold up the glaſs to us, as it did unto the patriarch.——

——Dear inconſiderate Chriſtians! wait not, I beſeech you, till then;—take a view of your life now;—— look back, behold this fair ſpace capable of ſuch heavenly improvements —all ſcrawl'd over and defaced with—

——I

——I want words to ſay, with what ——for I think only of the reflections with which you are to ſupport yourſelves, in the decline of a life ſo miſerably caſt away, ſhould it happen, as it often does, that ye have ſtood idle unto the eleventh hour, and have all the work of the day to perform when night comes on, and no one can work.

2dly. As to the evil of the days of the years of our pilgrimage——ſpeculation and fact appear at variance again.——We agree with the patriarch, that the life of man is miſerable; and yet the world looks happy enough ——and every thing tolerably at its eaſe. It muſt be noted indeed, that the

the patriarch in this account, ſpeaks merely his preſent feelings, and ſeems rather to be giving a hiſtory of his ſufferings, than a ſyſtem of them, in contradiction to that of the God of Love. Look upon the world he has given us,——obſerve the riches and plenty which flows in every channel, not only to ſatisfy the deſires of the temperate,——but of the fanciful and wanton——every place is almoſt a paradiſe, planted when nature was in her gayeſt humour.

——Every thing has two views. Jacob, and Job, and Solomon, gave one ſection of the globe,——and this repreſentation another:——truth lieth betwixt—or rather, good and evil are

mixed

mixed up together; which of the two preponderates, is beyond our enquiry; ——but, I truſt—it is the good:—— firſt, As it renders the Creator of the world more dear and venerable to me; and ſecondly, Becauſe I will not ſuppoſe, that a work intended to exalt his glory, ſhould ſtand in want of apologies.

Whatever is the proportion of miſery in this world, it is certain, that it can be no duty of religion to increaſe the complaint,——or to affect the praiſe which the Jeſuit's college of Granado, give of their *Sanchez*,—— That tho' he lived where there was a very ſweet garden, yet, was never ſeen to touch a flower; and that he would rather

rather die than eat ſalt or pepper, or ought that might give a reliſh to his meat.

I pity the men whoſe natural pleaſures are burthens, and who fly from joy, (as theſe ſplenetick and moroſe ſouls do) as if it was really an evil in itſelf.

If there is an evil in this world, 'tis ſorrow and heavineſs of heart.——The loſs of goods,——of health,——of coronets and mitres, are only evil, as they occaſion ſorrow;——take that but——the reſt is fancy, and dwelleth only in the head of man.

Poor

Poor unfortunate creature that he is! as if the cauſes of anguiſh in the heart were not enow——but he muſt fill up the meaſure, with thoſe of caprice; and not only walk in a vain ſhadow,——but diſquiet himſelf in vain too.

We are a reſtleſs ſet of beings; and as we are likely to continue ſo to the end of the world,——the beſt we can do in it, is to make the ſame uſe of this part of our character, which wiſe men do of other bad propenſities——when they find they cannot conquer them,——they endeavour, at leaſt, to divert them into good channels.

If therefore we must be a sollicitous race of self-tormentors,—let us drop the common objects which make us so,—and for God's sake be sollicitous only to live well.

SER-

SERMON VIII.

The Parable of the RICH MAN and LAZARUS confidered.


BRITISH MUSEUM

SERMON VIII.

LUKE xvi. 31.

And he ſaid unto him, If they hear not Moſes and the prophets, neither will they be perſuaded, tho' one ſhould riſe from the dead.

THESE words are the concluſion of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus; the deſign of which was to ſhew us the neceſſity of conducting ourſelves, by ſuch lights as GOD had been pleaſed to give us: the ſenſe and meaning of the patriarch's final determination in the text being

this, That they who will not be perſuaded to anſwer the great purpoſes of their being, upon ſuch arguments as are offered to them in ſcripture, will never be perſuaded to it by any other means, how extraordinary ſoever; —*If they hear not Moſes and the prophets, neither will they be perſuaded, though one ſhould riſe from the dead.*———

——Riſe from the dead! To what purpoſe? What could ſuch a meſſenger propoſe or urge, which had not been propoſed and urged already? the novelty or ſurprize of ſuch a viſit might awaken the attention of a curious unthinking people, who ſpent their time in nothing elſe, but to hear and tell ſome new thing; but ere the wonder

wonder was well over, ſome new wonder would ſtart up in its room, and then the man might return to the dead from whence he came, and not a ſoul make one enquiry about him.

——This, I fear, would be the concluſion of the affair. But to bring this matter ſtill cloſer to us, let us imagine, if there is nothing unworthy in it, that GOD in compliance with a curious world,——or from a better motive,——in compaſſion to a ſinful one, ſhould vouchſafe to ſend one from the dead, to call home our conſcience and make us better Chriſtians, better citizens, better men, and better ſervants to GOD than what we are.

Now bear with me, I beſeech you, in framing ſuch an addreſs, as I imagine, would be moſt likely to gain our attention, and conciliate the heart to what he had to ſay: the great channel to it, is Intereſt,——and there he would ſet out.

He might tell us, (after the moſt indiſputable credentials of whom he ſerved) That he was come a meſſenger from the great God of Heaven, with reiterated propoſals, whereby much was to be granted us on his ſide, ——and ſomething to be parted with on ours: but, that, not to alarm us, ——'twas neither houſes, nor land, nor poſſeſſions;——'twas neither wives, or children, or brethren, or ſiſters, which

which we had to forſake;——no one rational pleaſure to be given up;——no natural endearment to be torn from.——

——In a word, he would tell us, We had nothing to part with——but what was not for our intereſts to keep,——and that was our Vices; which brought death and miſery to our doors.

He would go on, and prove it by a thouſand arguments, that to be temperate and chaſte, and juſt and peaceable, and charitable and kind to one another,——was only doing that for CHRIST's ſake, which was moſt for our own; and that were we in a compacity of capitulating with GOD upon

what terms we would ſubmit to his government,——he would convince us, 'twould be impoſſible for the wit of man, to frame any propoſals more for our preſent intereſts, than *to lead an uncorrupted life——to do the thing which is lawful and right*, and lay ſuch reſtraints upon our appetites as are for the honour of human nature, and the refinement of human happineſs.

When this point was made out, and the alarms from Intereſt got over,——the ſpectre might addreſs himſelf to the other paſſions,——in doing this, he could but give us the moſt engaging ideas of the perfections of God,——or could he do more, than impreſs the moſt aweful ones, of his majeſty

majeſty and power:——he might remind us, that we are creatures but of a day, haſtening to the place from whence we ſhall not return;——that during our ſtay, we ſtood accountable to this Being, who tho' rich in mercies,——yet was terrible in his judgments;——that he took notice of all our actions;——that he was about our paths, and about our beds, and ſpied out all our ways; and was ſo pure in his nature, that he would puniſh even the wicked imaginations of the heart, and had appointed a day, wherein he would enter into this enquiry.——

He might add——

But

But what?——with all the eloquence of an inſpired tongue, What could he add or ſay to us, which has not been ſaid before? the experiment has been tried a thouſand times upon the hopes and fears, the reaſons and paſſions of men, by all the powers of nature,—the application of which have been ſo great, and the variety of addreſſes ſo unanſwerable, that there is not a greater paradox in the world, than that ſo good a religion ſhould be no better recommended by it's profeſſors.

The fact is, mankind are not always in a humour to be convinced,—and ſo long as the pre-engagement with our paſſions ſubſiſts, it is not argumentation which can do the buſineſs;—

neſs;—we may amuſe ourſelves with the ceremony of the operation, but we reaſon not with the proper faculty, when we ſee every thing in the ſhape and colouring, in which the treachery of the ſenſes paint it: and indeed, were we only to look into the world, and obſerve how inclinable men are to defend evil, as well as to commit it, ——one would think, at firſt ſight, they believed, that all diſcourſes of religion and virtue were mere matters of ſpeculation, for men to entertain ſome idle hours with; and conclude very naturally, that we ſeemed to be agreed in no one thing, but ſpeaking well—and acting ill. But the trueſt comment is in the text,—*If they hear not Moſes and the prophets, &c.*

If

If they are not brought over to the intereſts of religion upon ſuch diſcoveries as GOD has made——or has enabled them to make, they will ſtand out againſt all evidence:——in vain ſhall *one* riſe for their conviction;——was the earth to give up her dead——'twould be the ſame;——every man would return again to his courſe, and the ſame bad paſſions would produce the ſame bad actions to the end of the world.

This is the principal leſſon of the parable; but I muſt enlarge upon the whole of it——becauſe it has ſome other uſeful leſſons, and they will beſt preſent themſelves to us as we go along.

In

In this parable, which is one of the moſt remarkable in the goſpel, our SAVIOUR repreſents a ſcene, in which, by a kind of contraſt, two of the moſt oppoſite conditions that could be brought together from human life, are paſs'd before our imaginations.

The one, a man exalted above the level of mankind, to the higheſt pinnacle of proſperity,——to riches——to happineſs.——I ſay, *happineſs*,——in compliance with the world, and on a ſuppoſition, that the poſſeſſion of riches muſt make us happy, when the very purſuit of them ſo warms our imaginations, that we ſtake both body and ſoul upon the event, as if they were things not to be purchaſed at too dear

dear a rate. They are the wages of wiſdom,——as well as of folly.——Whatever was the caſe here, is beyond the purport of the parable;——the ſcripture is ſilent, and ſo ſhould we; it marks only his outward condition, by the common appendages of it, in the two great articles of Vanity and Appetite:——to gratify the one, he was cloathed in purple and fine linen: to ſatisfy the other,——fared ſumptuouſly every day;——and upon every thing too——we'll ſuppoſe, that climates could furniſh——that luxury could invent, or the hand of ſcience could torture.

Cloſe by his gates is repreſented an object whom Providence might ſeem

to

to have placed there, to cure the pride of man, and ſhew him to what wretchedneſs his condition might be brought: a creature in all the ſhipwreck of nature,——helpleſs,——undone,——in want of friends, in want of health,——and in want of every thing with them which his diſtreſſes called for.

In this ſtate he is deſcribed as deſiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table; and tho' the caſe is not expreſsly put, that he was refuſed, yet as the contrary is not affirmed in the hiſtorical part of the parable,——or pleaded after by the other, that he ſhewed mercy to the miſerable, we may conclude his re-

queſt was unſucceſsful,——like too many others in the world, either ſo high lifted up in it, that they cannot look down diſtinctly enough upon the ſufferings of their fellow creatures, ——or by long ſurfeiting in a continual courſe of banqueting and good cheer, they forget there is ſuch a diſtemper as hunger, in the catalogue of human infirmities.

Overcharged with this, and perhaps, a thouſand unpitied wants in a pilgrimage through an inhoſpitable world, the poor man ſinks ſilently under his burden.—But good GOD! whence is this? Why doeſt thou ſuffer theſe hardſhips in a world which thou haſt made? Is it for thy honour, that one man

man ſhould eat the bread of fulneſs, and ſo many of his own ſtock and lineage eat the bread of ſorrow?——That this man ſhould go clad in purple, and have all his paths ſtrewed with roſe-buds of delight, whilſt ſo many mournful paſſengers go heavily along, and paſs by his gates, hanging down their heads? Is it for thy Glory, O God! that ſo large a ſhade of miſery ſhould be ſpread acroſs thy works?——or, Is it that we ſee but a part of them? When the great chain at length is let down, and all that has held the two worlds in harmony is ſeen;——when the dawn of that day approaches, in which all the diſtreſsful incidents of this Drama ſhall be unravel'd;——when every man's caſe,

shall be reconsidered, ——then wilt thou be fully justified in all thy ways, and every mouth shall be stopped.

After a long day of mercy, misspent in riot and uncharitableness, the rich man *died also*:——the parable adds,—and was buried;—— Buried no doubt in triumph, with all the ill timed pride of funerals, and empty decorations, which worldly folly is apt to prostitute upon those occasions.

But this was the last vain show; the utter conclusion of all his epicurean grandeur;——the next is a scene of horror, where he is represented by our SAVIOUR, in a state of the utmost misery, from whence he is supposed to

lift up his eyes towards heaven, and cry to the patriarch Abraham for mercy.

And Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things.——

——That he had received his good things,——'twas from heaven,——and could be no reproach: with what severity soever the scripture speaks against riches, it does not appear, that the living or faring sumptuously every day, was the crime objected to the rich man; or that it is a real part of a vicious character: the case might be then, as now: his quality and station in the world might be supposed

to be ſuch, as not only to have juſtified his doing this, but, in general, to have required it without any imputation of doing wrong; for differences of ſtations there muſt be in the world, which muſt be ſupported by ſuch marks of diſtinction as cuſtom impoſes. The exceeding great plenty and magnificence, in which Solomon is deſcribed to have lived, who had ten fat oxen, and twenty oxen out of the paſtures, and a hundred ſheep, beſides harts, and roebucks, and fallow deer, and fatted fowl, with thirty meaſures of fine flower, and three ſcore meaſures of meal, for the daily proviſion of his table;——all this is not laid to him as a ſin, but rather remarked as an inſtance of God's bleſſing

ing to him;——and whenever theſe things are otherwiſe, 'tis from a waſtful and diſhoneſt perverſion of them to pernicious ends,——and oft times, to the very oppoſite ones for which they were granted,——to glad the heart, to open it, and render it more kind.——

And this ſeems to have been the ſnare the rich man had fallen into—and poſſibly, had he fared leſs ſumptuouſly,——he might have had more cool hours for reflection, and been better diſpoſed to have conceived an idea of want, and to have felt compaſſion for it.

And Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things.——Remember! ſad ſubject of recollection! that a man has paſſed through this world with all the bleſſings and advantages of it, on his ſide, ——favoured by God Almighty with riches,—— befriended by his fellow creatures in the means of acquiring them,——aſſiſted every hour by the ſociety of which he is a member, in the enjoyment of them——to remember, how much he has received,—— how little he has beſtowed,——that he has been no man's friend,——no one's protector,——no one's benefactor,——bleſſed God!——

Thus

Thus begging in vain for himſelf, he is repreſented at laſt as interceeding for his brethren, that Lazarus might be ſent to them to give them warning, and ſave them from the ruin which he had fallen into;——*They have Moſes and the prophets*, was the anſwer of the patriarch,——*let them hear them*; but the unhappy man is repreſented, as diſcontented with it; and ſtill perſiſting in his requeſt, and urging,—*Nay, father Abraham, but if one went from the dead, they would repent.*

——He thought ſo——but Abraham knew otherwiſe:—— and the grounds of the determination, I have explained already,——ſo ſhall proceed

to draw ſome other concluſions and leſſons from the parable.

And firſt, our SAVIOUR might further intend to diſcover to us by it, the dangers to which great riches naturally expoſe mankind, agreeably to what is elſewhere declared, how hardly ſhall they who have them, enter into the kingdom of heaven.

The truth is, they are often too dangerous a bleſſing for GOD to truſt us with, or we to manage: they ſurround us at all times with eaſe, with nonſenſe, with flattery, and falſe friends, with which thouſands and ten thouſands have periſhed:——they are apt

apt to multiply our faults, and treacherouſly to conceal them from us;——they hourly adminiſter to our temptations;——and allow us neither time to examine our faults, or humility to repent of them:—nay, what is ſtrange, do they not often tempt men even to covetouſneſs; and tho' amidſt all the ill offices which riches do us, one would laſt ſuſpect this vice, but rather think the one a cure for the other; yet ſo it is, that many a man contracts his ſpirits upon the enlargement of his fortune, and is the more empty for being full.

But there is leſs need to preach againſt this: we ſeem all to be haſtening to the oppoſite extreme of luxury and

and expence; we generally content ourſelves with the ſolution of it; and ſay, 'Tis a natural conſequence of trade and riches—and there it ends.

By the way, I affirm, there is a miſtake in the account; and that it is not riches which are the cauſe of luxury,——but the corrupt calculation of the world, in making riches the balance for honour, for virtue, and for every thing that is great and good, which goads ſo many thouſands on with an affectation of poſſeſſing more than they have,——and conſequently of engaging in a ſyſtem of expences they cannot ſupport.

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In one word, 'tis the neceſſity of *appearing* to be ſomebody, in order to be ſo——which ruins the world.

This leads us to another leſſon in the parable, concerning the true uſe and application of riches; we may be ſure from the treatment of the rich man, that he did not employ thoſe talents as GOD intended.——

How GOD did intend them,—may as well be known from an appeal to your own hearts, and the inſcription you ſhall read there,——as from any chapter and verſe I might cite upon the ſubject. Let us then for a moment, my dear auditors! turn our eyes that way, and conſider the traces which

even

even the moſt inſenſible man may have proof of, from what he may perceive ſpringing up within him from ſome caſual act of generoſity; and tho' this is a pleaſure which properly belongs to the good, yet let him try the experiment;——let him comfort the captive, or cover the naked with a garment, and he will feel what is meant by that moral delight ariſing in the mind from the conſcience of a humane action.

But to know it right, we muſt call upon the compaſſionate;——Cruelty gives evidence unwillingly, and feels the pleaſure but imperfectly; for this, like all other pleaſures, is of a relative nature, and conſequently the enjoyment

ment of it, requires ſome qualification in the faculty, as much as the enjoyment of any other good does:—there muſt be ſomething antecedent in the diſpoſition and temper which will render that good,——a good to that individual; otherwiſe, tho' 'tis true it may be poſſeſſed,——yet it never can be enjoyed.

Conſider how difficult you would find it to convince a miſerly heart, that any thing is good, which is not profitable? or a libertine one, that any thing is bad, which is pleaſant?

Preach to a voluptuary, who has modell'd both mind and body to no other happineſs, but good eating and

drinking,——bid him *taste and see how good God is*:——there is not an invitation in all nature would confound him like it.

In a word, a man's mind must be like your proposition before it can be relished; and 'tis the resemblance between them, which brings over his judgment, and makes him an evidence on your side.

'Tis therefore not to the cruel,——'tis to the merciful;——to those who rejoice with those that rejoice, and weep with them that weep,——that we make this appeal:——'tis to the generous, the kind, the humane, that I am

I am now to tell the ſad * ſtory of the fatherleſs, and of him who hath no helper, and beſpeak your alms-giving in behalf of thoſe, who know not how to aſk for it themſelves.

——What can I ſay more?——it is a ſubject on which I cannot inform your judgment,——and in ſuch an audience, I would not preſume to practiſe upon your paſſions: let it ſuffice to ſay, that they whom God hath bleſſed with the means,——and for whom he has done more, in bleſſing them likewiſe with a diſpoſition; have abundant reaſon to be thankful to him, as the author of every good gift, for

* Charity Sermon at St. Andrew's, Holborn.

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the meaſure he has beſtowed to them of both: 'tis the refuge againſt the ſtormy wind and tempeſt, which he has planted in our hearts; and the conſtant fluctuation of every thing in this world, force all the ſons and daughters of Adam to ſeek ſhelter under it by turns. Guard it by entails and ſettlements as we will, the moſt affluent plenty may be ſtripp'd, and find all its worldly comforts like ſo many withered leaves dropping from us;—the crowns of princes may be ſhaken; and the greateſt that ever awed the world, have looked back and moralized upon the turn of the wheel.

That which has happened to one, ——may happen to every man; and there-

therefore, that excellent rule of our SAVIOUR, in acts of benevolence, as well as every thing elſe, ſhould govern us;——*That whatſoever ye would that men ſhould do to you, do ye alſo unto them.*

Haſt thou ever laid upon the bed of languiſhing, or laboured under a diſtemper which threatened thy life? Call to mind thy ſorrowful and penſive ſpirit at that time, and ſay, What it was that made the thoughts of death ſo bitter:—if thou had'ſt children,——I affirm it, the bitterneſs of death lay there;——if unbrought up, and unprovided for, What will become of them? Where will they find a friend when I am gone, who will

ſtand up for them and plead their cauſe againſt the wicked?

——Bleſſed God! to thee, who art a father to the fatherleſs, and a huſband to the widow,—I entruſt them.

Haſt thou ever ſuſtained any conſiderable ſhock in thy fortune? or, Has the ſcantineſs of thy condition hurried thee into great ſtraits, and brought thee almoſt to diſtraction? Conſider what was it that ſpread a table in that wilderneſs of thought,——who made thy cup to overflow? Was it not a friend of conſolation who ſtepped in,——ſaw thee embarraſſed with tender pledges of thy love, and the partner of thy cares,——took them under

der his protection?——Heaven! thou wilt reward him for it!——and freed thee from all the terrifying apprehenſions of a parent's love.

Haſt thou——

——But how ſhall I aſk a queſtion which muſt bring tears into ſo many eyes?—Haſt thou ever been wounded in a more affecting manner ſtill, by the loſs of a moſt obliging friend,—or been torn away from the embraces of a dear and promiſing child by the ſtroke of death?—— bitter remembrance! nature droops at it—but nature is the ſame in all conditions and lots of life. ——A child thruſt forth in an evil hour, without food, without raiment,

bereft of inſtruction, and the means of its ſalvation, is a ſubject of more tender heart-aches, and will awaken every power of nature:——as we have felt for ourſelves,—let us feel for CHRIST's ſake—let us feel for theirs: and may the GOD of all comfort bleſs you. Amen.

SERMON IX.

Pride.



SERMON IX.

LUKE xiv. 10, 11.

But thou, when thou art bidden, go and ſit down in the loweſt room, that when he that bad thee cometh, he may ſay to thee, Friend, go up higher, then ſhalt thou have worſhip in the preſence of them who ſit at meat with thee: for whoſoever exalteth himſelf, ſhall be abaſed; and he that humbleth himſelf, ſhall be exalted.

IT is an exhortation of our SAVIOUR's to Humility, addreſſed by way of inference from what he had ſaid in the three foregoing verſes of

the chapter, where, upon entering into the houſe of one of the chief Phariſees to eat bread, and marking how ſmall a portion of this neceſſary virtue entered in with the ſeveral gueſts, diſcovering itſelf from their chooſing the chief rooms, and moſt diſtinguiſhed places of honour;—he takes the occaſion which ſuch a behaviour offered, to caution them againſt Pride;——ſtates the inconvenience of the paſſion;——ſhews the diſappointments which attend it;——the diſgrace in which it generally ends; in being forced at laſt, to recede from the pretenſions to what is more than our due; which, by the way, is the very thing the paſſion is eternally promoting us to expect. When, therefore, thou

thou art bidden to a wedding, ſays our Saviour, ſit not down in the higheſt room, leſt a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; and he that bad thee and him, come and ſay to thee,——Give this man place; and thou begin with ſhame to take the loweſt room.

——But thou, when thou art bidden, go and ſit down in the loweſt room;——hard lecture!——In the loweſt room?——What,——do I owe nothing to myſelf? Muſt I forget my ſtation, my character in life? Reſign the precedence which my birth, my fortune, my talents, have already placed me in poſſeſſion of?——give all up! and ſuffer inferiors to take

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my honour? Yes;——for that, says our SAVIOUR, is the road to it: *For when he that had thee cometh, he will say to thee, Friend, go up higher; then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them who sit at meat with thee:—— for whosoever exalteth himself, shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted.*

To make good the truth of which declaration, it is not necessary we should look beyond this life, and say, That in that day of retribution, wherein every high thing shall be brought low, and every irregular passion dealt with as it deserves;——that pride, amongst the rest, (considered as a vicious character) shall meet with it's proper

proper punishment of being abased, and lying down for ever in shame and dishonour.——It is not necessary we should look so far forwards for the accomplishment of this: the words seem not so much to imply the threat of a distant punishment, the execution of which was to be respited to that day; ——as the declaration of a plain truth depending upon the natural course of things, and evidently verified in every hour's commerce of the world; from whence, as well as from our reasoning upon the point, it is found, That Pride lays us open to so many mortifying encounters, which Humility in its own nature rests secure from,—— that verily, each of them, in this world, have their reward faithfully

dealt out by the natural workings of men's paſſions; which, tho' very bad executioners in general, yet are ſo far juſt ones in this, that they ſeldom ſuffer the exultations of an inſolent temper to eſcape the abaſement, or the deportment of a humble one to fail of the honour, which each of their characters do deſerve.

In other vicious exceſſes which a man commits, the world (tho' it is not much to its credit) ſeems to ſtand pretty neuter: if you are extravagant or intemperate, you are looked upon as the greateſt enemy to yourſelf,——or if an enemy to the public,——at leaſt, you are ſo remote a one to each individual, that no one feels himſelf imme-

immediately concerned in your punishment; but in the instances of pride, the attack is personal: for as this passion can only take its rise from a secret comparison, which the party has been making of himself to my disadvantage, every intimation he gives me of what he thinks of the matter, is so far a direct injury, either as it with-holds the respect which is my due,——or perhaps denies me to have any; or else, which presses equally hard, as it puts me in mind of the defects which I really have, and of which I am truly conscious, and consequently think myself the less deserving of an admonition: in every one of which cases, the proud man, in whatever language he speaks it,——if it is expressive of this superiority over me, either in the gifts of

fortune,

fortune, the advantages of birth or improvements, as it has proceeded from a mean eſtimation and poſſibly a very unfair one of the like pretenſions in myſelf,——the attack, I ſay, is perſonal; and has generally the fate to be felt and reſented as ſuch.

So that with regard to the preſent inconveniences, there is ſcarce any vice hating ſuch as are immediately puniſhed by laws, which a man may not indulge with more ſafety to himſelf, than this one of pride;——the humbleſt of men, not being ſo entirely void of the paſſion themſelves, but that they ſuffer ſo much from the overflowings of it in others, as to make the literal accompliſhment of the text,

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a common intereſt and concern: in which they are generally ſucceſsful,—the nature of the vice being ſuch, as not only to tempt you to it, but to afford the occaſions itſelf of its own humiliation.

The proud man,——ſee!——he is ſore all over; touch him——you put him to pain: and tho' of all others, he acts as if every mortal was void of all ſenſe and feeling, yet is poſſeſſed with ſo nice and exquiſite a one himſelf, that the ſlights, the little neglects and inſtances of diſeſteem, which would be ſcarce felt by another man, are perpetually wounding him, and oft times piercing him to his very heart.

I would

I would not therefore be a proud man, was it only for this, that it ſhould not be in the power of every one who thought fit—to chaſtiſe me; ——my other infirmities, however unworthy of me, at leaſt will not incommode me:——ſo little diſcountenance do I ſee given to them, that it is not the world's fault, if I ſuffer by them:——but here ——if I exalt myſelf, I have no proſpect of eſcaping; ——with this vice I ſtand ſwoln up in every body's way, and muſt unavoidably be thruſt back: which ever way I turn, whatever ſtep I take under the direction of this paſſion, I preſs unkindly upon ſome one, and in return, muſt prepare myſelf for ſuch

mortifying repulſes, as will bring me down, and make me go on my way ſorrowing.

This is from the nature of things, and the experience of life as far back as Solomon, whoſe obſervation upon it was the ſame,——and it will ever hold good, *that before honour was humility, and a haughty ſpirit before a fall.* ——*Put not therefore thyſelf forth in the preſence of the king, and ſtand not in the place of great men:*——*for better is it*——(which by the way is the very diſſuaſive in the text)——*better is it, that it be ſaid unto thee, Friend, come up higher, than that thou ſhouldeſt be put lower in the preſence of the prince whom thine eyes have ſeen.*

Thus much for the illuſtration of this one argument of our SAVIOUR's, againſt Pride: —— there are many other conſiderations which expoſe the weakneſs of it, which his knowledge of the heart of man might have ſuggeſted; but as the particular occaſion which gave riſe to this lecture of our SAVIOUR's againſt pride, naturally led him to ſpeak of the mortifications which attend ſuch inſtances of it, as he then beheld: —— for this reaſon the other arguments might be omitted, which perhaps in a ſet diſcourſe would be doing injuſtice to the ſubject. I ſhall therefore, in the remaining part of this, beg leave to offer ſome other conſiderations of a moral as well as a religious nature upon this ſubject, as

ſo many inducements to check this weak paſſion in man; which, tho' one of the moſt inconvenient of his infirmities,—the moſt painful and diſcourteous to ſociety, yet by a ſad fatality, ſo it is, that there are few vices, except ſuch whoſe temptations are immediately ſeated in our natures, to which there is ſo general a propenſity throughout the whole race.

This had led ſome ſatyrical pens to write, That all mankind at the bottom were proud alike;——that one man differed from another, not ſo much in the different portions which he poſſeſſed of it, as in the different art and addreſs by which he excells in the management and diſguiſe of it to the

world: we trample, no doubt too often, upon the pride of Plato's mantle, with as great a pride of our own; yet on the whole the remark has more ſpleen than truth in it; there being thouſands, (if any evidence is to be allowed) of the moſt unaffected humility, and trueſt poverty of ſpirit, which actions can give proof of. Notwithſtanding this, ſo much may be allowed to the obſervation, That Pride is a vice which grows up in ſociety ſo inſenſibly;—ſteals in unobſerved upon the heart upon ſo many occaſions;—forms itſelf upon ſuch ſtrange pretenſions, and when it has done, veils itſelf under ſuch a variety of unſuſpected appearances,—ſometimes even under that of Humility itſelf;—in

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all which cases, Self-love, like a false friend, instead of checking, most treacherously feeds this humour,—— points out some excellence in every soul to make him vain, and think more highly of himself, than he ought to think;——that upon the whole, there is no one weakness into which the heart of man is more easily betray'd, ——or which requires greater helps of good sense and good principles to guard against.

And first, the root from which it springs, is no inconsiderable discredit to the fruit.

If you look into the best moral writers, who have taken pains to search

into the grounds of this paſſion,—— they will tell you, That Pride is the vice of little and contracted ſouls;— that whatever affectation of greatneſs it generally wears and carries in the looks, there is always meanneſs in the heart of it:——a haughty and an abject temper, I believe, are much nearer a-kin than they will acknowledge;——like *poor* relations, they look a little ſhy at one another at firſt ſight, but trace back their pedigree, they are but collateral branches from the ſame ſtem; and there is ſcarce any one who has not ſeen many ſuch inſtances of it, as one of our poets alludes to, in that admirable ſtroke he has given of this affinity, in his deſcription of a *Pride which licks the duſt.*

As

As it has *meanneſs* at the bottom of it,—ſo it is juſtly charged with having *weakneſs* there too, of which it gives the ſtrongeſt proof, in regard to the chief end it has in view, and the abſurd means it takes to bring it about.

Conſider a moment,——What is it the proud man aims at?——Why,—ſuch a meaſure of reſpect and deference, as is due to his ſuperior merit, &c. &c.

Now, good ſenſe and a knowledge of the world ſhew us, that how much ſoever of theſe are due to a man, allowing he has made a right calculation,——they are ſtill dues of ſuch a nature, that they are not to be inſiſted

upon; Honour and Reſpect muſt be a *Free-will offering*: treat them otherwiſe, and claim them from the world as a tax,——they are ſure to be withheld; the firſt diſcovery of ſuch an expectation diſappoints it, and prejudices your title to it for ever.

To this ſpeculative argument of it's weakneſs, it has generally the ill fate to add another of a more ſubſtantial nature, which is matter of fact; that to turn giddy upon every little exaltation, is experienced to be no leſs a mark of a *weak brain* in the figurative, than it is in the literal ſenſe of the expreſſion——in ſober truth, 'tis but a ſcurvy kind of a trick *(quoties voluit Fortuna jocari)*—when Fortune

in one of her merry moods, takes a poor devil with this paſſion in his head, and mounts him up all at once as high as ſhe can get him——for it is ſure to make him play ſuch phantaſtick tricks, as to become the very fool of the comedy; and was he not a general benefactor to the world in making it merry, I know not how Spleen could be pacified during the repreſentation.

A third argument againſt Pride is the natural connection it has with vices of an unſocial aſpect: the Scripture ſeldom introduces it alone——Anger, or Strife, or Revenge, or ſome inimical paſſion, is ever upon the ſtage with it; the proofs and reaſons of which

which I have not time to enlarge on, and therefore ſhall ſay no more upon this argument than this,——that was there no other,——yet the bad company this vice is generally found in, would be ſufficient by itſelf to engage a man to avoid it.

Thus much for the moral conſiderations upon this ſubject; a great part of which, as they illuſtrate chiefly the inconveniencies of Pride in a ſocial light, may ſeem to have a greater tendency to make men guard the appearances of it, than conquer the paſſion itſelf, and root it out of their nature: to do this effectually we muſt add the arguments of religion, without which, the beſt moral diſcourſe may

prove

prove little better than a cold political lecture, taught merely to govern the paſſion ſo, as not to be injurious to a man's preſent intereſt or quiet; all which a man may learn to practiſe well enough, and yet at the ſame time be a perfect ſtranger to the beſt part of humility, which implies not a concealment of Pride, but an abſolute conqueſt over the firſt riſings of it which are felt in the heart of man.

And firſt, one of the moſt perſuaſive arguments which religion offers to this end, is that which ariſes from the ſtate and condition of ourſelves, both as to our natural and moral imperfections. It is impoſſible to reflect a moment upon this hint, but with a heart

full

full of the humble exclamation, *O God! what is man!——even a thing of nought*——a poor, infirm, miſerable, ſhort-lived creature, that paſſes away like a ſhadow, and is haſtening off the ſtage where the theatrical titles and diſtinctions, and the whole maſk of Pride which he has worn for a day will fall off, and leave him naked as a neglected ſlave. Send forth your imagination, I beſeech you, to view the laſt ſcene of the greateſt and proudeſt who ever awed and governed the world——ſee the empty vapour diſappearing! one of the arrows of mortality this moment ſticks faſt within him: ſee——it forces out his life, and freezes his blood and ſpirits.

—Approach

——Approach his bed of ſtate——lift up the curtain——regard a moment with ſilence——

——are theſe cold hands and pale lips, all that is left of him who was canoniz'd by his own pride, or made a god of, by his flatterers?

O my ſoul! with what dreams haſt thou been bewitched? how haſt thou been deluded by the objects thou haſt ſo eagerly graſped at?

If this reflection from the natural imperfection of man, which he cannot remedy, does nevertheleſs ſtrike a damp upon human Pride, much more muſt the conſiderations do ſo, which ariſe

ariſe from the wilful depravations of his nature.

Survey yourſelves, my dear Chriſtians, a few moments in this light—behold a diſobedient, ungrateful, intractable and diſorderly ſet of creatures, going wrong ſeven times in a day,——acting ſometimes every hour of it againſt your own convictions——your own intereſts, and the intentions of your GOD, who wills and propoſes nothing but your happineſs and proſperity——what reaſon does this view furniſh you for Pride? how many does it ſuggeſt to mortify and make you aſhamed?——well might the ſon of Syrach ſay in that ſarcaſtical remark of his upon it, *That* PRIDE *was not made*

made for man——for ſome purpoſes, and for ſome particular beings, the paſſion might have been ſhaped——but not for him——fancy it where you will, 'tis no where ſo improper——'tis in no creature ſo unbecoming——

——But why ſo cold an aſſent, to ſo inconteſted a truth?——Perhaps thou haſt reaſons to be proud:——for heaven's ſake, let us hear them——Thou haſt the advantages of birth and title to boaſt of——or thou ſtandeſt in the ſunſhine of court favour——or thou haſt a large fortune—— or great talents——or much learning—or nature has beſtowed her graces upon thy perſon——ſpeak—on which of theſe foundations haſt thou raiſed this fan-

eful structure?——Let us examine them.

—Thou art well born;——then trust me, 'twill pollute no one drop of thy blood to be humble: humility calls no man down from his rank,——divests the princes of their titles; it is in life, what the *clear-obscure* is in painting; it makes the hero step forth in the canvas, and detaches his figure from the group in which he would otherwise stand confounded for ever.

If thou art rich——then shew the greatness of thy fortune,——or what is better, the greatness of thy soul in the meekness of thy conversation; condescend to men of low estate,——support

pare the diſtreſſed, and patroniſe the neglected.——Be great; but let it be in conſidering riches as they are; as talents committed to an earthen veſſel——That thou art but the *receiver*,——and that to be obliged and be vain too, is but the old ſolecism of pride and beggary, which, tho' they often meet, yet ever make but an abſurd ſociety.

If thou art powerful in intereſt, and ſtanding deified by a ſervile tribe of dependents,——why ſhouldſt thou be proud,——becauſe they are hungry?——Scourge me ſuch ſycophants, they have turned the heads of thouſands as well as mine.——

——But 'tis thy own dexterity and ſtrength which have gained thee this eminence;——allow it; but art thou proud, that thou ſtandeſt in a place where thou art the mark of one man's envy, another man's malice, or a third man's revenge,——where good men may be ready to ſuſpect thee, and whence bad men will be ready to pull thee down. I would be proud of nothing that is uncertain: Haman was ſo, becauſe he was admitted alone to queen Eſther's banquet; and the diſtinction raiſed him,——but it was fifty cubits higher than he ever dream'd or thought of.

Let us paſs on to the pretences of learning, &c. &c. If thou haſt a little,

tle, thou wilt be proud of it in courſe: if thou haſt much, and good ſenſe along with it, there will be no reaſon to diſpute againſt the paſſion: a beggarly parade of remnants is but a ſorry object of Pride at the beſt;——but more ſo, when we can cry out upon it, as the poor man did of his hatchet,——* *Alas! Maſter,——for it was borrowed.*

It is treaſon to ſay the ſame of Beauty,——whatever we do of the arts and ornaments with which Pride is wont to ſet it off: the weakeſt minds are moſt caught with both; being ever glad to win attention and credit from

* 2 Kings, 6, 7.

ſmall and ſlender accidents, thro' diſ-ability of purchaſing them by better means. In truth, Beauty has ſo many charms, one knows not how to ſpeak againſt it; and when it happens that a graceful figure is the habitation of a virtuous ſoul,—when the beauty of the face ſpeaks out the modeſty and humility of the mind, and the juſtneſs of the proportion raiſes our thoughts up to the art and wiſdom of the great Creator,—ſomething may be alowrd it,——and ſomething to the embelliſhments which ſet it off,—and yet, when the whole apology is read,——it will be found at laſt, that Beauty like Truth, never is ſo glorious as when it goes the plaineſt.

Sim-

Simplicity is the great friend to nature, and if I would be proud of any thing in this ſilly world, it ſhould be of this honeſt alliance.

Conſider what has been ſaid; and may the GOD of all mercies and kindneſs watch over your paſſions, and inſpire you *with all humbleneſs of mind, meekneſs, patience, and long ſuffering.*—Amen.

SERMON X.

Humility.

SERMON X.



THE great business of man, in the regulation of his spirit, the possession of such a frame and temper of mind, as will lead us peaceably through this world, and in the many weary stages of it, afford us, what we shall be sure to stand in need of——

Refy unto our souls——

SERMON X.

MATTHEW xi. 29.

Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

THE great business of man, is the regulation of his spirit, the possession of such a frame and temper of mind, as will lead us peaceably through this world, and in the many weary stages of it, afford us, what we shall be sure to stand in need of,——*Rest unto our souls.*——

—Rest

——Reſt unto our ſouls!——'tis all we want—the end of all our wiſhes and purſuits: give us a proſpect of this, we take the wings of the morning, and fly to the uttermoſt parts of the earth to have it in poſſeſſion: we ſeek for it in titles, in riches and pleaſures,—climb up after it by ambition, ——come down again and ſtoop for it by avarice,——try all extremes; ſtill we are gone out of the way, nor is it, till after many miſerable experiments, that we are convinced at laſt, we have been ſeeking every where for it, but where there was a proſpect of finding it; and that is, within ourſelves, in a meek and lowly diſpoſition of heart. This, and this only will give us reſt unto our ſouls:——reſt, from

from thoſe turbulent and haughty paſſions which diſturb our quiet: ——reſt, from the provocations and diſappointments of the world, and a train of untold evils too long to be recounted, againſt all which this frame and preparation of mind is the beſt protection.

I beg you will go along with me in this argument. Conſider how great a ſhare of the uneaſineſſes which take up and torment our thoughts, owe their riſe to nothing elſe, but the diſpoſitions of mind which are oppoſite to this character.

With regard to the provocations and offences, which are unavoidably hap-

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happening to a man in his commerce with the world,——take it as a rule,——as a man's pride is,——so is always his displeasure;——as the opinion of himself rises,——so does the injury,——so does his resentment: 'tis this which gives edge and force to the instrument which has struck him,——and excites that heat in the wound, which renders it mortal.

See how different the case is, with the humble man: one half of these painful conflicts he actually escapes; the other part fall lightly on him:—he provokes no man by contempt; thrusts himself forward as the mark of no man's envy; so that he cuts off the first fruitful occasions of the greatest

part

part of these evils, and for those in which the passions of others would involve him, like the humble shrub in the valley, gently gives way, and scarce feels the injury of those stormy encounters which rend the proud cedar, and tear it up by it's roots.

If you consider it, with regard to the many disappointments of this life, which arise from the hopes of bettering our condition, and advancing in the world, ——the reasoning is the same.

What we expect —— is even in proportion to the estimate made of ourselves; when pride and self-love have brought us in their account of this matter, —— we find, that we are mor-

thy

thy of all honours—fit for all places and employments:——as our expectations riſe and multiply, ſo muſt our diſappointments with them; and there needs nothing more, to lay the foundation of our unhappineſs, and both to make and keep us miſerable. And in truth there is nothing ſo common in life, as to ſee thouſands, whom you would ſay, had all the reaſon in the world to be at reſt, ſo torn up and diſquieted with ſorrows of this claſs, and ſo inceſſantly tortured with the diſappointments which their pride and paſſions have created for them, that tho' they appear to have all the ingredients of happineſs in their hands,—— they can neither compound or uſe them:—How ſhould they? the goad

is

is ever in their ſides, and ſo hurries them on from one expectation to another, as to leave them no reſt day or night.

Humility therefore, recommends itſelf as a ſecurity againſt theſe heart-aches, which tho' ridiculous ſometimes in the eye of the beholder, yet are ſerious enough to the man who ſuffers them; and I believe would make no inconſiderable account in a true catalogue of the diſquietudes of mortal man: againſt theſe, I ſay, Humility is the beſt defence.

He that is little in his own eyes, is little too in his deſires, and conſequently moderate in his purſuit of them:

them: like another man, he may fail in his attempts and lose the point he aimed at,——but that is all,——he loses not himself,——he loses not his happiness and peace of mind with it,——even the contentions of the humble man are mild and placid.——Blessed character! when such a one is thrust back, who does not pity him?——when he falls, who would not stretch out a hand to raise him up?

And here, I cannot help stopping in the midst of this argument, to make a short observation, which is this. When we reflect upon the character of humility,——we are apt to think it stands the most naked and defenceless of all virtues whatever,——the least

leaſt able to ſupport it's claims againſt the inſolent antagoniſt who ſeems ready to bear him down, and all oppoſition which ſuch a temper can make.

Now, if we conſider him as ſtanding alone,—no doubt, in ſuch a caſe he will be overpowered and trampled upon by his oppoſer;——but if we conſider the meek and lowly man, as he is—fenced and guarded by the love, the friendſhip and wiſhes of all mankind,——that the other ſtands alone, hated, diſcountenanced, without one true friend or hearty well wiſher on his ſide;——when this is balanced, we ſhall have reaſon to change our opinion, and be convinced that the

humble man, ſtrengthened with ſuch an alliance, is far from being ſo over-matched as at firſt ſight he may appear;—nay I believe one might venture to go further and engage for it, that in all ſuch caſes, where real fortitude and true perſonal courage were wanted, he is much more likely to give proof of it, and I would ſooner look for it in ſuch a temper than in that of his adverſary. Pride may make a man violent,——but Humility will make him firm:——and which of the two, do you think, likely to come off with honour?——he, who acts from the changeable impulſe of heated blood, and follows the uncertain motions of his pride and fury,——or the man who ſtands cool and collected in himſelf;

ſelf; who governs his reſentments, inſtead of being governed by them, and on every occaſion acts upon the ſteady motives of principle and duty.

But this by the way;——though in truth it falls in with the main argument; for if the obſervation is juſt, and Humility has the advantages where we ſhould leaſt expect them, the argument riſes higher in behalf of thoſe which are more apparently on it's ſide.——In all which, if the humble man finds, what the proud man muſt never hope for in this world,——that is *reſt to his ſoul*,——ſo does he likewiſe meet with it from the influence ſuch a temper has upon his condition under the evils of his life, not as-

chargeable upon the vices of men, but as the portion of his inheritance by the appointment of God. For if, as Job ſays, we are born to trouble as the ſparks fly upwards, ſurely it is he who thinks the greateſt of theſe troubles below his ſins,—and the ſmalleſt favours above his merit, that is likely to ſuffer the leaſt from the one, and enjoy the moſt from the other: 'tis he who poſſeſſes his ſoul in meekneſs, and keeps it ſubjected to all the iſſues of fortune, that is the fartheſt out of their reach.——No.——He blames not the ſun, though it does not ripen his vine, nor bluſters at the winds, though they bring him no profit.——If the fountain of the humble man riſes not as high as he could wiſh,——he thinks how-

however, that it riſes as high as it ought, and as the laws of nature ſtill do their duty, that he has no cauſe to complain againſt them.

If diſappointed of riches—he knows the providence of God is not his debtor; that though he has received leſs than others, yet as he thinks himſelf leſs than the leaſt, he has reaſon to be thankful.

If the world goes untoward with the humble man, in other reſpects,—he knows a truth which the proud man does never acknowledge, and that is, that the world was not made for him; and therefore how little ſhare ſoever he has of its advantages, he ſees

an argument of content, in reflecting how little it is, that a compound of ſin, of ignorance, and frailty, has grounds to expect.

A ſoul thus turned and reſigned, is carried ſmoothly down the ſtream of providence; no temptations in his paſſage diſquiet him with deſire,——no dangers alarm him with fear: though open to all the changes and chances of others,——yet by ſeeing the juſtice of what happens,—and humbly giving way to the blow,——though he is ſmitten, he is not ſmitten like other men, or feels the ſmart which they do.

Thus much for the doctrine of Humility; let us now look towards the example of it.

It

It is obſerved by ſome one, that as pride was the paſſion through which ſin and miſery entered into the world, and gave our enemy the triumph of ruining our nature, that therefore the Son of God, who came to ſeek and to ſave that which was loſt, when he entered upon the work of our reſtoration, he began at the very point where he knew we had failed; and this he did, by endeavouring to bring the ſoul of man back to it's original temper of Humility; ſo that his firſt publick addreſs from the Mount began with a declaration of bleſſedneſs to the poor in ſpirit,——and almoſt his laſt exhortation in the text, was to copy the fair original he had ſet them of this virtue,

and *to learn of him to be meek and lowly in heart.*

It is the moſt unanſwerable appeal that can be made to the heart of man, and ſo perſuaſive and accommodated to all Chriſtians, that as much pride as there is ſtill in the world, it is not credible but that every believer muſt receive ſome tincture of the character or bias towards it from the example of ſo great, and yet ſo humble a Maſter, whoſe whole courſe of life was a particular lecture to this one virtue; and in every inſtance of it ſhewed, that he came not to ſhare the pride and glories of life, or ſwell the hopes of ambitious followers, but to caſt

caſt a damp upon them for ever, by appearing himſelf rather as a ſervant than a maſter,——coming, as he continually declared, not to be miniſtred unto, but to miniſter; and as the Prophet had foretold in that mournful deſcription of him,——to have no form, or comelineſs, nor any beauty that they ſhould deſire him. The voluntary meanneſs of his birth,——the poverty of his life,——the low offices in which it was engaged, in preaching the Goſpel to the poor,—the inconveniences which attended the execution of it, in having no where to lay his head,——all ſpoke the ſame language;——that the God of truth ſhould ſubmit to the ſuſpicion of an impoſture:—his humble deportment under that, and a thouſand

ſtand provocations of a thankleſs people, ſtill raiſes this character higher;—and what exalts it to its higheſt pitch, ——the tender and pathetick proof he gave of the ſame diſpoſition at the concluſion and great cataſtrophe of his ſuffering,—when a life full of ſo many inſtances of humility was crowned with the moſt endearing one of *humbling himſelf even to the death of the croſs*;—— the death of a ſlave,——a malefactor, ——drag'd to *Calvary* without oppoſition,——inſulted without complaint,——

—Bleſſed Jesus! how can the man who calls upon thy name, but learn of thee to be meek and lowly in heart?—how can he but profit when ſuch a leſ-

a leſſon was ſeconded—by ſuch an example.

If Humility ſhines ſo bright in the character of CHRIST, ſo does it in that of his religion; the true ſpirit of which tends all the ſame way.—Chriſtianity, when rightly explained and practiſed, is all meekneſs and candour, and love and courteſy; and there is no one paſſion our SAVIOUR rebukes ſo often, or with ſo much ſharpneſs, as that one, which is ſubverſive of theſe kind effects,——and that is pride, which in proportion as it governs us, neceſſarily leads us on to a diſcourteous opinion and treatment of others,——I ſay *neceſſarily*,——becauſe 'tis a natural conſe-

consequence, and the progress from the one to the other is unavoidable.

This our SAVIOR often remarks in the character of the Pharisees:——they trusted in themselves,——'twas no wonder then they despised others.

This, I believe, might principally relate to spiritual pride, which by the way, is the worst of all prides; and as it is a very bad species of a very bad passion, I cannot do better than conclude the discourse with some remarks upon it.

In most conceits of a religious superiority, there has usually gone hand in

in hand with it, another fancy,——that which——I ſuppoſe has fed it;——and that is, a perſuaſion of ſome more than ordinary aids and illuminations from above.——Let us examine this matter.

That the influence and aſſiſtance of God's ſpirit in a way imperceptible to us, does enable us to render him an acceptable ſervice, we learn from ſcripture—in what particular manner this is effected, ſo that the act ſhall ſtill be imputed ours——the ſcripture ſays not: we know only the account is ſo, but as for any ſenſible demonſtrations of it's workings to be felt as ſuch within us——the word of God is utterly ſilent; nor can that ſilence be

ſup-

ſupplied by any experience.——We have none; unleſs you call the falſe pretences to it ſuch,——ſuggeſted by an enthuſiaſtic or diſtempered fancy. As expreſsly as we are told and pray for the inſpiration of GOD's ſpirit,—— there are no boundaries fixed, nor can any be ever marked to diſtinguiſh them from the efforts and determinations of our own reaſon: and as firmly as moſt Chriſtians believe the effects of them upon their hearts, I may venture to affirm, that ſince the promiſes were made, there never was a chriſtian of a cool head and ſound judgment, that in any inſtance of a change of life, would preſume to ſay, which part of his reformation was owing to divine help,——or which to

the

the operations of his own mind, or who, upon looking back, would pretend to ſtrike the line, and ſay, "here "it was that my own reflections "ended;"——and at this point the ſuggeſtions of the ſpirit of GOD began to take place.

However backwards the world has been in former ages in the diſcovery of ſuch points as GOD never meant us to know,——we have been more ſucceſsful in our own days:——thouſands can trace out now the impreſſions of this divine intercourſe in themſelves, from the firſt moment they received it, and with ſuch diſtinct intelligence of it's progreſs and work-

ings, as to require no evidence of it's truth.

It must be owned, that the present age has not altogether the honour of this discovery;—there were too many grounds given to improve on in the religious cant of the last century;—when the *in-comings*, *in-dwellings*, and *out-lettings* of the Spirit, were the subjects of so much edification; and, when, as they do now, the most illiterate mechanicks, who as a witty divine said of them, were much fitter to *make* a pulpit, than get into one,—were yet able so to frame their nonsense to the nonsense of the times, as to beget an opinion in their followers,

not only that they pray'd and preach'd by inſpiration, but that the moſt common actions of their lives were ſet about in the Spirit of the LORD.

The tenets of the quakers (a harmleſs quiet people) are collateral deſcendents from the ſame enthuſiaſtic original; and their accounts and way of reaſoning upon their inward light and ſpiritual worſhip, are much the ſame; which laſt they carry thus much further, as to believe the Holy Ghoſt comes down upon their aſſemblies, and *moves* them without regard to condition or ſex, to make interceſſions with unutterable groans.——

So that in fact, the opinions of methodiſts, upon which I was firſt enter-

ing, is but a republication with ſome alterations of the ſame extravagant conceits; and as enthuſiaſm generally ſpeaks the ſame language in all ages, 'tis but too ſadly verified in this, for tho' we have not yet got to the old terms of the in-comings and in-dwellings of the ſpirit,——yet we have arrived to the firſt feelings of its enterance, recorded with as particular an exactneſs, as an act of filiation,——ſo that numbers will tell you the identical place,——the day of the month, and the hour of the night, when the ſpirit came in upon them, and took poſſeſſion of their hearts.

Now there is this inconvenience on our ſide, That there is no arguing with

with a frenzy of this kind; for unleſs a repreſentation of the caſe, be a confutation of it's folly to them; they muſt forever be led captive by a deluſion, from which no reaſoner can redeem them: for if you ſhould enquire upon what evidence ſo ſtrange a perſuaſion is grounded?——they will tell you, "They feel it is ſo."——if you reply, That this is no conviction to you, who do not feel it like them, and therefore would wiſh to be ſatisfied by what tokens they are able to diſtinguiſh ſuch emotions from thoſe of fancy and complexion? they will anſwer, That the manner of it is incommunicable by human language,—but 'tis a matter of fact,——they feel its operations as plain and diſtinct, as

the natural ſenſations of pleaſure, or the pains of a diſorder'd body.—And ſince I have mention'd a diſorder'd body, I cannot help ſuggeſting, that amongſt the more ſerious and deluded of this ſect, 'tis much to be doubted whether a diſorder'd body has not oft times as great a ſhare in letting in theſe conceits, as a diſorder'd mind.

When a poor diſconſolated drooping creature is terrified from all enjoyment,—prays without ceaſing 'till his imagination is heated,——faſts and mortifies and mopes, till his body is in as bad a plight as his mind; is it a wonder, that the mechanical diſturbances and conflicts of an empty belly, interpreted by an empty head, ſhould

be miſtook for workings of a different kind from what they are,——or that in ſuch a ſituation, where the mind ſits upon the watch for extraordinary occurrences, and the imagination is pre-engaged on its ſide, is it ſtrange if every commotion ſhould help to fix him in this malady, and make him a fitter ſubject for the treatment of a Phyſician than a Divine.

In many caſes, they ſeem ſo much above the ſkill of either, that unleſs God in his mercy rebuke this lying ſpirit, and call it back,——it may go on and perſuade millions into their deſtruction.——

SERMON XI.

Advantages of Christianity to the world.

SERMON XI.

Advantages of Chriſtianity to the world.

SERMON XI.

ROMANS i. 22.



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SERMON XI.

ROMANS i. 22.

Profeſſing themſelves to be wiſe, they became fools.

THERE is no one project to which the whole race of mankind is ſo univerſally a bubble, as to that of being thought Wiſe; and the affectation of it is ſo viſible, in men of all complexions, that you every day ſee ſome one or other ſo very ſollicitous to eſtabliſh the character, as not to allow himſelf leiſure to do the things which fairly win it;——expending more

more art and ſtratagem to appear ſo in the eyes of the world, than what would ſuffice to make him ſo in truth.——

It is owing to the force of this deſire, that you ſee in general, there is no injury touches a man ſo ſenſibly, as an inſult upon his parts and capacity: tell a man of other defects, that he wants learning, induſtry or application,——he will hear your reproof with patience.——Nay you may go further: take him in a proper ſeaſon, you may tax his morals,——you may tell him he is irregular in his conduct,——paſſionate or revengeful in his nature,—looſe in his principles,——deliver it with the gentleneſs of a friend,——poſſibly he'll not only

bear

bear with you,——but, if ingenuous, he will thank you for your lecture and promise a reformation;——but hint,——hint but at a defect in his intellectuals,——touch but that sore place,——from that moment you are look'd upon as an enemy sent to torment him before his time, and in return may reckon upon his resentment and ill-will for ever; so that in general you will find it safer to tell a man, he is a knave than a fool,——and stand a better chance of being forgiven, for proving he has been wanting in a point of common honesty, than a point of common sense.

Strange fools that we are! as if to live well was not the greatest argument

ment of Wiſdom;——and, as if what reflected upon our morals, did not moſt of all reflect upon our underſtandings!

This, however, is a reflection we make a ſhift to overlook in the heat of this purſuit; and tho' we all covet this great character of Wiſdom, there is ſcarce any point wherein we betray more folly than in our judgments concerning it; rarely bringing this precious ore either to the teſt or the ballance; and tho' 'tis of the laſt conſequence not to be deceived in it,—we generally take it upon truſt,——ſeldom ſuſpected the quality, but never the quantity of what has fallen to our lot. So that however inconſiſtent a

man

man ſhall be in his opinions of this, and what abſurd meaſures ſoever he takes in conſequence of it, in the conduct of his life,—he ſtill ſpeaks comfort to his ſoul; and like Solomon, when he had leaſt pretence for it,—in the midſt of his nonſenſe will cry out and ſay,——*That all my wiſdom remaineth with me.*

Where then is wiſdom to be found? and where is the place of underſtanding?

The politicians of this world, *profeſſing themſelves wiſe*,——admit of no other claims of wiſdom but the knowledge of men and buſineſs, the underſtanding the intereſts of ſtates,——the

intrigues of courts, ——the finding out the paſſions and weakneſſes of foreign miniſters, ——and turning them and all events to their country's glory and advantage. ——

——Not ſo the little man of this world, who thinks the main point of wiſdom, is to take care of himſelf; ——to be wiſe in his generation; —— to make uſe of the opportunity whilſt he has it, of raiſing a fortune, and heraldizing a name. —— Far wide is the ſpeculative and ſtudious man (whoſe office is in the clouds) from ſuch little ideas; ——wiſdom dwells with him in finding out the ſecrets of nature; ——ſounding the depths of arts and ſciences; ——meaſuring the heavens;

telling the number of the ſtars, and calling them all by their names: ſo that when in our buſy imaginations we have built and unbuilt again *God's ſtories in the heavens*,——and fancy we have found out the point whereon to fix the foundations of the earth; and in the language of the book of Job, have ſearched out the corner ſtone thereof, we think our titles to wiſdom built upon the ſame baſis with thoſe of our knowledge, and that they will continue for ever.

The miſtake of theſe pretenders, is ſhewn at large by the Apoſtle, in the chapter from which the text is taken, ——*Profeſſing themſelves* WISE,—— in which expreſſion (by the way) St. Paul

Paul is thought to allude to the vanity of the Greeks and Romans, who being great encouragers of arts and learning, which they had carried to extraordinary heights, considered all other nations as *Barbarians*, in respect of themselves; and amongst whom, particularly the Greeks, the men of study and enquiry, had assumed to themselves, with great indecorum, the title of the Wise Men.

With what parade and ostentation soever this was made out, it had the fate to be attended with one of the most mortifying abatements which could happen to wisdom; and that was an ignorance of those points which most concerned man to know.

This

This he ſhews from the general ſtate of the gentile world, in the great article of their miſconceptions of the Deity ——and, as wrong notions produce wrong actions,——of the duties and ſervices they owed to him, and in courſe of what they owed to one another.

For tho', as he argues in the foregoing verſes,——*The inviſible things of him from the creation of the world might be clearly ſeen and underſtood, by the things that are made*;——that is,——Tho' God by the cleareſt diſcovery of himſelf, had ever laid before mankind ſuch evident proofs of his eternal Being,——his infinite power and perfections, ſo that what is to be

known of his invisible nature, might all along be traced by the marks of his goodness, ——and the visible frame and order of the world:——yet so utterly were they without excuse,—— that tho' they knew God, and saw his image and superscription in every part of his works,——*yet they glorified him not.*——So bad a use did they make of the powers given them for this great discovery, that instead of adoring the Being thus manifested to them, in purity and truth, they fell into the most gross and absurd delusions;——*changed the glory of the incorruptible God, into an image made like unto corruptible men,——to birds,—— to four footed beasts and creeping things;* ——*Professing themselves to be wise,*—— they

they became fools——All their ſpecious wiſdom was but a more glittering kind of ignorance, and ended in the moſt diſhonourable of all miſtakes,——in ſetting up fictitious gods, to receive the tribute of their adoration and thanks.

The fountain of religion being thus poiſoned,——no wonder the ſtream ſhewed it's effects, which are charged upon them in the following words, where he deſcribes the heathen world as *full of all unrighteouſneſs*,——fornication,——covetouſneſs,——maliciouſneſs,——full of murder,——envy,——debate,——malignity,——whiſperers,——backbiters,——haters of God,——proud,——boaſters,——inventors of

evil things,——disobedient to parents,——without understanding, without natural affection,——implacable,——unmerciful!——God in heaven defend us from such a catalogue!

But these disorders, if fairly considered, you'll say, have in no ages arisen so much from want of light, as a want of disposition to follow the light which God has ever imparted: that the law written in their hearts, was clear and express enough for any reasonable creatures, and would have directed them, had they not suffered their passions more forcibly to direct them otherwise: that if we are to judge from this effect, namely, the corruption of the world, the same prejudice

judice will recur even against the Chriſtian religion; ſince mankind have at leaſt been as wicked in later days, as in the more remote and ſimple ages of the world; and that, if we may truſt to facts, there are no vices which the apoſtle fixes upon the heathen world, before the preaching of the goſpel, which may not be paralleled by as black a catalogue of vices in the Chriſtian world ſince.

This neceſſarily brings us to an enquiry, Whether Chriſtianity has done the world any ſervice?—and, How far the morals of it have been made better ſince this ſyſtem has been embraced?

In litigating this, one might oppose facts to facts to the end of the world, without coming one jot nearer the point. Let us ſee how far their miſtakes concerning the Deity, will throw light upon the ſubject.

That there was one ſupreme Being who made this world, and who ought to be worſhipped by his creatures, is the foundation of all religion, and ſo obvious a truth in nature, ——that Reaſon, as the Apoſtle acknowledges, was always able to diſcover it: and yet it ſeems ſtrange, that the ſame faculty which made the diſcovery, ſhould be ſo little able to keep true to its own judgment, and ſupport it long againſt the prejudices of wrong heads, and

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the propenſity of weak ones, towards idolatry and a multiplicity of gods.

For want of ſomething to have gone hand in hand with reaſon, and fixed the perſuaſion for ever upon their minds, that there was in truth but one God, the Maker and ſupporter of Heaven and Earth,—infinite in wiſdom, and knowledge, and all perfections;——how ſoon was this ſimple idea loſt, and mankind led to diſpoſe of theſe attributes inherent in the Godhead, and divide and ſubdivide them again amongſt deities, which their own dreams had given ſubſtance to;—— his eternal power and dominion parcell'd out to gods of the land,——to gods of the ſea,——to gods of the

infernal regions; whilst the great God of gods, and Lord of lords, who roleth over all the kingdoms of the world, ——— who is so great that nought is able to controul or withstand his power, was supposed to rest contented with his allotment, and to want power to act within such parts of his empire, as they dismembered and assigned to others.

If the number of their gods and this partition of their power, would lessen the idea of their majesty, What must be the opinions of their origin? When instead of that glorious description, which Scripture gives of "The Ancient of Days who inhabiteth eternity," ——— they gravely assigned parti-

particular times and places for the births and education of their gods; so that there was scarce a hamlet or even a desert in Greece or Italy, which was not rendered memorable by some favour or accident of this kind.

And what rendered such conceits the more gross and absurd, —— they supposed not only that the gods they worshipped had a beginning, but that they were produced by fleshly parents, and accordingly, they attributed to them corporeal shapes and difference of sex: and indeed in this they were a little consistent, for their deities seemed to partake so much of the frailties to which flesh and blood is subject, that their history and their pedigree were

much

much of a piece, and might reasonably claim each other. For they imputed to them not only the human defects of ignorance, want, fear, and the like, but the most unmanly sensualities, and what would be a reproach to human nature,——such as cruelty, adulteries, rapes, incests; and even in the accounts which we have from the sublimest of their poets,——what are they, but anecdotes of their squabbles amongst themselves,—their intrigues, their jealousies, their ungovernable transports of choler,—nay, even their thefts,—their drunkenness, and bloodshed?

Here let us stop a moment and enquire, what was Reason doing all this time,

time, to be ſo miſerably inſulted and abuſed? Where held ſhe her empire whilſt her bulwarks were thus born down, and her firſt principles of religion and truth lay buried under them? If ſhe was able by herſelf to regain the power ſhe had loſt, and put a ſtop to this folly and confuſion,——why did ſhe not? If ſhe was not able to reſiſt this torrent alone,—the point is given up——ſhe wanted aid; and revelation has given it.

But tho' reaſon, you'll ſay, could not overthrow theſe popular miſtakes, ——yet it ſaw the folly of them, and was at all times able to diſprove them.

No doubt it was; and it is certain too, that the more diligent enquirers after truth, did not in fact fall into these absurd notions, which by the way, is an observation more to our purpose than theirs, who usually make it, and shews that tho' their reasonings were good, that there always wanted something which they could not supply to give them such weight, as would lay an obligation upon mankind to embrace them, and make that to be a law, which otherwise was but an opinion without force.

Besides,——which is a more direct answer,——tho' 'tis true, the ablest men gave no credit to the multiplicity of gods,——(for they had a religion

for

for themſelves, and another for the populace) yet they were guilty of what in effect was equally bad, in holding an opinion which neceſſarily ſupported theſe very miſtakes,——namely, that as different nations had different gods, it was every man's duty (I ſuppoſe more for quietneſs than principle's ſake) to worſhip the gods of his country; which by the way, conſidering their numbers, was not ſo eaſy a taſk, ——for what with celeſtial gods, and gods aerial, terreſtrial and infernal, with the goddeſſes, their wives and miſtreſſes, upon the loweſt computation, the heathen world acknowledged no leſs than thirty thouſand deities, all which claimed the rites and ceremonies of religious worſhip.

But,

But, 'twill be said, allowing the bulk of mankind were under such delusions——they were still but speculative.——What was that to their practice? however defective in their theology and more abstracted points,——their morality was no way connected with it.——There is no need, that the everlasting laws of justice and mercy should be fetched down from above,——since they can be proved from more obvious mediums;——they were as necessary for the same good purposes of society then as now, and we may presume they saw their interest and pursued it.

That the necessities of society, and the impossibilities of its subsisting

otherwise, would point out the convenience, or if you will, ——the duty of ſocial virtues, is unqueſtionable:—but I firmly deny, that therefore religion and morality are independent of each other: they appear ſo far from it, that I cannot conceive how the one, in the true and meritorious ſenſe of the duty, can act without the influence of the other: ſurely the moſt exalted motive which can only be depended upon for the uniform practice of virtue, ——muſt come down from *above*, ——from the love and imitation of the goodneſs of that Being in whoſe ſight we wiſh to render ourſelves acceptable: this will operate at all times and all places, ——in the darkeſt cloſet

ſet as much as on the greateſt and moſt public theatres of the world.

But with different conceptions of the Deity, or ſuch impure ones as they entertained, is it to be doubted whether in the many ſecret tryals of our virtue, we ſhould not determine our caſes of conſcience with much the ſame kind of caſuiſtry as that of the Libertine in Terence, who being engaged in a very unjuſtifiable purſuit, and happening to ſee a picture which repreſented a known ſtory of Jupiter in a like tranſaction,——argued the matter thus within himſelf.——If the great Jupiter could not reſtrain his appetites, and deny himſelf an indulgence

gence of this kind,——*ego Homuncio, hoc non facerem?* ſhall I a mortal,—an inconſiderable mortal too, cloath'd with infirmities of fleſh and blood,—pretend to a virtue, which the Father of gods and men could not? What inſolence!

The concluſion was natural enough; and as ſo great a maſter of nature puts it into the mouth of one of his principal characters, no doubt the language was then underſtood; it was copied from common life, and was not the firſt application which had been made of the ſtory.

It will ſcarce admit of a queſtion, Whether vice would not naturally

grow bold upon the credit of ſuch an example; or whether ſuch impreſſions did not influence the lives and morals of many in the heathen world: and had there been no other proof of it, but the natural tendency of ſuch notions to corrupt them, it had been ſufficient reaſon to believe it was ſo.

No doubt, there is ſufficient room for amendment in the chriſtian world, and we may be ſaid to be a very corrupt and bad generation of men, conſidering what motives we have from the purity of our religion, and the force of it's ſanctions to make us better:——yet ſtill I affirm, if theſe reſtraints were taken off, the world would be infinitely worſe; and tho'

ſome

ſome ſenſe of morality might be preſerved, as it was in the heathen world, with the more conſiderate of us, yet in general I am perſuaded, that the bulk of mankind upon ſuch a ſuppoſition, would ſoon come to *live without* GOD *in the world*, and in a ſhort time differ from Indians themſelves in little elſe but their complexions.

If after all, the chriſtian religion has not left a ſufficient proviſion againſt the wickedneſs of the world, ——the ſhort and true anſwer is this, That there can be none.

It is ſufficient to leave us without excuſe, that the excellency of this in-

ſtitution in its doctrine, its precepts, and its examples, has a proper tendency to make us a virtuous and a happy people;——every page is an addreſs to our hearts to win them to theſe purpoſes;——but as religion was not intended to work upon men by force and natural neceſſity, but by moral perſuaſion, which ſets good and evil before them,——ſo that if men have power to do the evil and chuſe the good,——and will abuſe it,——this cannot be avoided.——Religion ever implies a freedom of choice, and all the beings in the world which have it, were created free to ſtand and free to fall;——and therefore men who will not be perſuaded by this

this way of addreſs, muſt expect, and be contented to be reckoned with according to the talents they have received.

SERMON XII.

The ABUSES of CONSCIENCE considered.

SERMON XII.

The ABUSES of CONSCIENCE considered.

ADVERTISEMENT.

A S the following Sermon upon Adoles of Conscience, has already appeared in the body of a moral work, more read than understood, the Editor begs pardon of those who have purchased it in that shape, and in this also, if he made them pay twice actual



The case is common—but it was judged reasonable might better like it, and others better understand it just as it was preached, than with the breaks and interruptions given to the logic and argument as it stands there offered to the world.

It was an Assize Sermon, preached in the Cathedral Church at York, and wrote

ADVERTISEMENT.

AS the following Sermon upon Abuſes of Conſcience, has already appeared in the body of a moral work, more read than underſtood, the Editor begs pardon of thoſe who have purchaſed it in that ſhape, and in this alſo, for being made to pay twice actually for the ſame thing.

——The caſe is common: but it was judged that ſome might better like it, and others better underſtand it juſt as it was preached, than with the breaks and interruptions given to the ſenſe and argument as it ſtands there offered to the world.

It was an Aſſize Sermon, preached in the Cathedral Church at York, and wrote

wrote by the ſame hand with the others in theſe four volumes, and as they are probably the laſt (except the ſweepings of the Author's ſtudy after his death) that will be publiſhed, it was thought fit to add it to the collection, —where moreover it ſtands a chance of being read by many grave people with a much ſafer conſcience.

All the Editor wiſhes, is, That this may not after all, be one of thoſe many abuſes of it ſet forth in what he is now going to read.

SER-

SERMON XII.

HEBREWS xiii. 18.

——For we truſt we have a good Conſcience,——

TRUST!——Truſt we have a good Conſcience!——Surely, you will ſay, if there is any thing in this life which a man may depend upon, and to the knowledge of which he is capable of arriving upon the moſt indiſputable evidence, it muſt be this very thing,——Whether he has a good Conſcience, or no.

If a man thinks at all, he cannot well be a ſtranger to the true ſtate of this

this account;——He muſt be privy to his own thoughts and deſires——He muſt remember his paſt purſuits, and know certainly the true ſprings and motives, which, in general, have govern'd the actions of his life.

In other matters we may be deceiv'd by falſe appearances; and, as the wiſe man complains, *Hardly do we gueſs aright at the things that are upon the earth, and with labour do we find the things that are before us!*——but here the mind has all the evidence and facts within herſelf:——is conſcious of the web ſhe has wove:——knows its texture and fineneſs, and the exact ſhare which every paſſion has had in working upon the ſeveral deſigns;

which

which virtue or vice has plann'd before her.

Now, ——as Conſcience is nothing elſe but the knowledge which the mind has within itſelf of this; and the judgment, either of approbation or cenſure, which it unavoidably makes upon the ſucceſſive actions of our lives, ——'tis plain, you will ſay, from the very terms of the propoſition, whenever this inward teſtimony goes againſt a man, and he ſtands ſelf-accuſed,—that he muſt neceſſarily be a *guilty man*. And, on the contrary, when the report is favourable on his ſide, and his heart condemns him not,——that it is not a matter of *truſt*, as the Apoſtle intimates, but a matter of

certainty and fact, that the *Conſcience* is *good*, and that the *man* muſt be *good* alſo.

At firſt ſight, this may ſeem to be a true ſtate of the caſe; and I make no doubt but the knowledge of right and wrong is ſo truly impreſs'd upon the mind of man; that, did no ſuch thing ever happen, as that the conſcience of a man, by long habits of ſin, might (as the Scripture aſſures us, it may) inſenſibly become hard; and, like ſome tender parts of his body, by much ſtreſs, and continual hard uſage, loſe, by degrees, that nice ſenſe and perception with which GOD and nature endowed it:——Did this never happen:—or was it certain that ſelf-

love could never hang the leaſt bias upon the judgment;—or that the little intereſts below could riſe up and perplex the faculties of our upper regions, and encompaſs them about with clouds and thick darkneſs:——could no ſuch thing as favour and affection enter this ſacred court:——did WIT diſdain to take a bribe in it, or was aſhamed to ſhew its face as an advocate for an unwarrantable enjoyment:—or, laſtly, were we aſſured that INTEREST ſtood always unconcern'd whilſt the cauſe was hearing,—and that PASSION never got into the judgment ſeat, and pronounced ſentence in the ſtead of reaſon, which is ſuppoſed always to preſide and determine upon the caſe:—was this truly ſo, as the objection

must ſuppoſe, no doubt, then, the religious and moral ſtate of a man would be exactly what he himſelf eſteemed it; and the guilt or innocence of every man's life could be known, in general, by no better meaſure, than the degrees of his own approbation or cenſure.

I own, in one caſe, whenever a man's Conſcience does accuſe him (as it ſeldom errs on that ſide) that he is guilty; and, unleſs in melancholy and hypochondriac caſes, we may ſafely pronounce that there is always ſufficient grounds for the accuſation.

But, the converſe of the propoſition will not hold true,——namely, That where-

wherever there is guilt, the Conſcience muſt accuſe; and, if it does not, that a man is therefore innocent.——This is not fact:——ſo that the common conſolation which ſome good chriſtian or other is hourly adminiſtring to himſelf,——That he thanks GOD, his mind does not miſgive him; and that, conſequently, he has a good Conſcience, becauſe he has a quiet one—As current as the inference is, and as infallible as the rule appears at firſt ſight, yet, when you look nearer to it, and try the truth of this rule upon plain facts, you find it liable to ſo much error, from a falſe application of it:—the principle on which it goes ſo often perverted:—the whole force of it loſt, and ſometimes ſo vilely caſt

away, that it is painful to produce the common examples from human life, which confirm this account.

A man ſhall be vicious and utterly debauched in his principles; exceptionable in his conduct to the world: ſhall live ſhameleſs,——in the open commiſſion of a ſin which no reaſon or pretence can juſtify;——a ſin, by which, contrary to all the workings of humanity within, he ſhall ruin for ever the deluded partner of his guilt;——rob her of her beſt dowry;——and not only cover her own head with diſhonour, but involve a whole virtuous family in ſhame and ſorrow for her ſake. Surely,——you'll think, conſcience muſt lead ſuch a man a

trouble-

troubleſome life:——he can have no reſt night or day from its reproaches.

Alas! Conſcience had ſomething elſe to do all this time than break in upon him: as *Elijah* reproached the god *Baal*, this *domeſtic God*, was either *talking, or purſuing, or was in a journey, or, peradventure, he ſlept and could not be awoke.* Perhaps he was gone out in company, with HONOUR, to fight a duel;——to pay off ſome debt at play;——or dirty annuity the bargain of his luſt.——Perhaps, Conſcience all this time was engaged at home, talking aloud againſt petty larceny, and executing vengeance upon ſome ſuch puny crimes as his fortune and rank, in life, ſecured

him againſt all temptation of committing;——ſo that he lives as merrily,——ſleeps as ſoundly in his bed;——and, at the laſt, meets death with as much unconcern,——perhaps, much more ſo than a much better man.

Another is ſordid, unmerciful;—a ſtrait-hearted, ſelfiſh wretch, incapable either of private friendſhips, or public ſpirit.——Take notice how he paſſes by the widow and orphan in their diſtreſs; and ſees all the miſeries incident to human life without a ſigh, or a prayer.——Shall not Conſcience riſe up and ſting him on ſuch occaſions? No.——Thank God, there is no occaſion. 'I pay every man his

'own,——I have no fornication to 'anſwer to my Conſcience, no faith-'leſs vows or promiſes to make up, 'I have debauch'd no man's wife or 'child.——Thank GOD I am not as 'other men, adulterers, unjuſt, or 'even as this libertine who ſtands be-'fore me.'

A third is crafty and deſigning in his nature.——View his whole life, ——'tis nothing elſe but a cunning contexture of dark arts and unequitable ſubterfuges baſely to defeat the true intent of all laws, plain dealing, and the ſafe enjoyment of our ſeveral properties.——You will ſee ſuch a one, working out a frame of little deſigns upon the ignorance and per-

plexities of the poor and needy man: ——Shall raiſe a fortune upon the inexperience of a youth,——or the unſuſpecting temper of his friend, who would have truſted him with his life. When old age comes on, and repentance calls him to look back upon this black account, and ſtate it over again with his Conſcience —— Conſcience looks into the *Statutes at Large*,—— finds perhaps no *expreſs law* broken by what he has done;——perceives no penalty or forfeiture incurr'd;—— ſees no ſcourge waving over his head, ——or priſon opening its gate upon him.——What is there to affright his Conſcience?——Conſcience has got ſafely entrench'd behind the letter of the law, ſits there invulnerable, forti-

fied

fied with *caſes* and *reports* ſo ſtrongly on all ſides,——that 'tis not preaching can diſpoſſeſs it of its hold.

Another ſhall want even this refuge,——ſhall break thro' all this ceremony of ſlow chicane; ſcorns the doubtful workings of ſecret plots and cautious trains to bring about his purpoſe.———See the bare-fac'd villain how he cheats, lyes, perjures, robs, murders,———horrid! But indeed much better was not to be expected in this caſe.——The poor man was in the dark!——His prieſt had got the keeping of his Conſcience,—and all he had let him know of it was, That he muſt believe in the *Pope*;—go to maſs;——croſs himſelf;——tell

His beads,——be a good Catholic; and that this in all conscience was enough to carry him to heaven. What?——if he perjures?——Why,——he had a mental reservation in it.——But if he is so wicked and abandoned a wretch as you represent him,——If he robs, or murders, will not Conscience on every such act, receive a wound itself?——Ay——But the man has carried it to confession, the wound digests there, and will do well enough,——and in a short time be quite healed up by absolution.

O *Popery*! What hast thou to answer for?——when not content with the too many natural and fatal ways thro' which the heart is every day wicked thus

thus treacherous to itself above all things,——thou haſt wilfully ſet open this wide gate of deceit before the face of this unwary *Traveller*,——too apt, God knows, to go aſtray of himſelf,——and confidently ſpeak peace to his ſoul, when there is no peace.

Of this the common inſtances, which I have drawn out of life, are too notorious to require much evidence. If any man doubts the reality of them, or thinks it impoſſible for man to be ſuch a bubble to himſelf,—I muſt refer him a moment to his reflections, and ſhall then venture to truſt the appeal with his own heart. Let him conſider in how different a degree of deteſtation, numbers of

wicked

wicked actions ſtand *there*; though equally bad and vicious in their own natures——he will ſoon find that ſuch of them as ſtrong inclination or cuſtom have prompted him to commit, are generally dreſs'd out and painted with all the falſe beauties which a ſoft and a flattering hand can give them; and that the others to which he feels no propenſity, appear, at once, naked and deformed, ſurrounded with all the true circumſtances of folly and diſhonour.

When David ſurprized Saul ſleeping in the cave, and cut off the ſkirt of his robe,——we read, his heart ſmote him for what he had done.—— But, in the matter of Uriah, where a faith-

a faithful and gallant ſervant, whom he ought to have lov'd and honour'd, fell to make way for his luſt; where *Conſcience* had ſo much greater reaſon to take the alarm,——his heart ſmote him not.——A whole year had almoſt paſſed from the firſt commiſſion of that crime——to the time Nathan was ſent to reprove him; and we read not once of the leaſt ſorrow or compunction of heart, which he teſtified during all that time, for what he had done.

Thus Conſcience, this once able monitor,——placed on high as a judge within us,——and intended, by our Maker, as a juſt and equitable one too,—by an unhappy train of cauſes

and

and impediments, — it takes often such imperfect cognizance of what paſſes, — does its office ſo negligently, — ſometimes ſo corruptly, that it is not to be truſted alone: and therefore, we find, there is a neceſſity, an abſolute neceſſity, of joining another principle with it, to aid, if not govern, its determinations.

—So that if you would form a juſt judgment of what is of infinite importance to you not to be miſled in; namely, in what degree of real merit you ſtand, either as an honeſt man, — an uſeful citizen, — a faithful ſubject to your king, — or a good ſervant to your God, — call

call in RELIGION and MORALITY. ——Look——What is written in the law of GOD?——How readeſt thou? ——Conſult calm reaſon, and the unchangeable obligations of juſtice and truth,——What ſay they?

Let Conſcience determine the matter upon theſe reports,——and then, if *thy heart condemn thee not*,—— which is the caſe the Apoſtle ſuppoſes,——the rule will be infallible, ——*Thou wilt have confidence towards God*;——that is, have juſt grounds to believe the judgment thou haſt paſt upon thyſelf, is the judgment of GOD; and nothing elſe but an anti-

cipation

cipation of that righteous ſentence, which will be pronounced, hereafter, upon thee by that BEING, before whom thou art finally to give an account of thy actions.

Bleſſed is the man, indeed then, as the Author of the book of *Eccleſiaſticus* expreſſes it, *Who is not pricked with the multitude of his ſins.—Bleſſed is the man whoſe heart hath not condemned him, and who is not fallen from his hope in the Lord. Whether he be rich*, continues he, *or whether he be poor,——if he have a good heart* (a heart thus guided and inform'd) *——He ſhall at all times rejoice in a chearful countenance.——His mind ſhall*

tell him more than ſeven watchmen that ſit above upon a tower on high. In the darkeſt doubts it ſhall conduct him ſafer than a thouſand Caſuiſts, and give the ſtate he lives in a better ſecurity for his behaviour, than all the clauſes and reſtrictions put together, which the wiſdom of the legiſlature is forced to multiply,——forced, I ſay, as things ſtand; human laws being not a matter of original choice, but of pure neceſſity, brought in to fence againſt the miſchievous effects of thoſe Conſciences which are no law unto themſelves: wiſely intending by the many proviſions made, That in all ſuch corrupt or miſguided caſes, where principle and the

checks

checks of Conſcience will not make us upright, —— to ſupply their force, and by the terrors of jails and halters oblige us to it.

To have the fear of God before our eyes; and, in our mutual dealings with each other, to govern our actions by the eternal meaſures of right and wrong:——the firſt of theſe will comprehend the duties of religion: the ſecond thoſe of morality; which are ſo inſeparably connected together, that you cannot divide theſe two *Tables*, even in imagination (tho' the attempt is often made in practice) without breaking and mutually deſtroying them both.

I ſaid

I ſaid the attempt is often made;——and ſo it is;——there being nothing more common than to ſee a man, who has no ſenſe at all of religion,——and indeed has *ſo much* of honeſty, as to pretend to none; who would yet take it as the bittereſt affront, ſhould you but hint at a ſuſpicion of his moral character,——or imagine he was not conſcientiouſly juſt, and ſcrupulous to the uttermoſt mite.

When there is ſome appearance that it is ſo,——tho' one is not willing even to ſuſpect the appearance of ſo great a virtue, as moral honeſty;—

yes were we to look into the grounds of it in the present case, I am perswaded we should find little reason to envy such a man the honour of his motive.

Let him declaim as pompously as he can on the subject, it will be found at last to rest upon no better foundation than either his interest, his pride, his ease, or some such little and changeable passion, as will give us but small dependence upon his actions in matters of great trust.

Give me leave to illustrate this by an example.

I know

I know the banker I deal with, or the physician I usually call in, to be neither of them men of much religion: I hear them make a jest of it every day, and treat all its sanctions with so much scorn and contempt, as to put the matter past doubt. Well,——notwithstanding this I put my fortune into the hands of the one, ——and, what is dearer still to me, I trust my life to the honest skill of the other.——Now let me examine what is my reason for this great confidence.——Why,——in the first place, I believe that there is no probability that either of them will employ the power I put into their hands, to my

disadvantage. I consider that honesty serves the purposes of this life. —— I know their success in the world depends upon the fairness of their characters; —— that they cannot hurt me without hurting themselves more.

But put it otherwise, namely, that interest lay for once on the other side. ——That a case should happen wherein the one, without stain to his reputation, could secrete my fortune, and leave me naked in the world; —— or that the other could send me out of it, and enjoy an estate by my death, without dishonour to himself or his art. —— In this case what hold have I of either of them? ——

Religion, the ſtrongeſt of all motives, is out of the queſtion.——Intereſt, the next moſt powerful motive in this world, is ſtrongly againſt me.——I have nothing left to caſt into the ſcale to ballance this temptation.——I muſt lay at the mercy of honour,——or ſome ſuch capricious principle.—Strait ſecurity! for two of my beſt and moſt valuable bleſſings,—— my property and my life!

As therefore we can have no dependence upon morality without religion;——ſo, on the other hand, there is nothing better to be expected from religion without morality; nor can any man be ſuppos'd to diſcharge his

duty to God, whatever fair appearances he may hang out that he does so, if he does not pay as conscientious a regard to the duties which he owes his fellow-creatures.

This is a point capable in itself of strict demonstration.——Nevertheless, 'tis no rarity to see a man whose real moral merit stands very low, who yet entertains the highest notion of himself, in the light of a devout and religious man. He shall not only be covetous, revengeful, implacable, but even wanting in points of common honesty.——Yet because he sins loud against the inferior part of the law,

—is

—— is zealous for ſome points of religion, —— goes twice a day to church, attends the ſacraments, —— and amuſes himſelf with a few inſtrumental duties of religion, —— ſhall chear his conſcience into a judgment that for this he is a religious man, and has diſcharged faithfully his duty to GOD: and you will find, that ſuch a man, thro' force of this deluſion, generally looks down with ſpiritual pride upon every other man who has leſs affectation of piety, tho', perhaps, ten times more moral honeſty than himſelf.

This is likewiſe a ſore evil under the ſun, and I believe there is no one

mistaken principle which, for its time, has wrought more serious mischiefs. For a general proof of this, examine the history of the *Romish* church.——See what scenes of cruelty, murders, rapines, bloodshed, have all been sanctified by a religion not strictly governed by morality.

In how many kingdoms of the world, has the crusading sword of this misguided Saint-Errant spared neither age, or merit, or sex, or condition?——And, as he fought under the banners of a religion, which set him loose from justice and humanity,——

—— he shewed none,—— mercilessly trampled upon both, heard neither the cries of the unfortunate, nor pitied their distresses.

If the testimony of past centuries in this matter is not sufficient,—— consider at this instant, how the votaries of that religion are every day thinking to do service and honour to God, by actions which are a dishonour and scandal to themselves.

To be convinced of this, go with me for a moment into the prisons of the inquisition.—— Behold *religion* with mercy and justice chain'd down

under

under her feet,——there sitting ghastly upon a black tribunal, propp'd up with racks and instruments of torment.——Hark!——What a piteous groan!——See the melancholy wretch who utter'd it, just brought forth to undergo the anguish of a mock-trial, and endure the utmost pains that a studied system of *religious cruelty* has been able to invent. Behold this helpless victim delivered up to his tormentors. His body so wasted with sorrow and long confinement, you'll see every nerve and muscle as it suffers.——Observe the last movement of this horrid engine.——What convulsions it has thrown him into.——

bown

Consider the nature of the posture in which he now lies stretch'd——What exquisite torture he endures, by it——'Tis all nature can bear——Good God! See how it keeps his weary soul hanging upon his trembling lips, willing to take its leave,——but not suffer'd to depart. Behold the unhappy wretch led back to his cell,——dragg'd out of it again to meet the flames,——and the insults in his last agonies, which this principle ——this principle that there *can* be religion without morality, has prepared for him.

The surest way to try the rectitude of any disputed notion, is to

down the consequences such a notion has produced, and compare them with the *spirit* of christianity.——'Tis the short and decisive rule, which our SAVIOUR has left for these and such like cases,——and is worth a thousand arguments.—*By their fruits*, says he, *ye shall know them.*

Thus religion and morality, like fast friends and natural allies, can never be set at variance, without the mutual ruin and dishonour of them both:——and whoever goes about this unfriendly office, is no well-wisher to either,——and whatever he pretends, he deceives his own heart,

and,

and, I fear, his morality as well as his religion will be vain.

I will add no farther to the length of this diſcourſe, than by two or three ſhort and independent Rules, deducible from what has been ſaid.

1*ſt*. Whenever a man talks loudly againſt religion, always ſuſpect that it is not his reaſon but his paſſions which have got the better of his creed.—A *bad life* and a *good belief* are diſagreeable and troubleſome neighbours, and where they ſeparate, depend upon it, 'tis for no other cauſe but quietneſs ſake.

2*dly*.

any. When a man thus represented, tells you in any particular instance, that such a thing goes *against* his conscience,——always believe he means exactly the same thing as when he tells you such a thing goes against his stomach,——a present want of appetite being generally the true cause of both.

In a word,——trust that man in nothing——who has not a conscience in every thing.

And in your own case remember this plain distinction, a mistake in which, has ruin'd thousands.——That your conscience is not a law;——no,——

God

God and reason made the law, and has placed Conscience within you to determine,—not like an *Asiatic Cadi*, according to the ebbs and flows of his own passions;——but like a *British judge* in this land of liberty, who makes no new law,——but faithfully declares that glorious law which he finds already written.

FINIS

28 MR 59